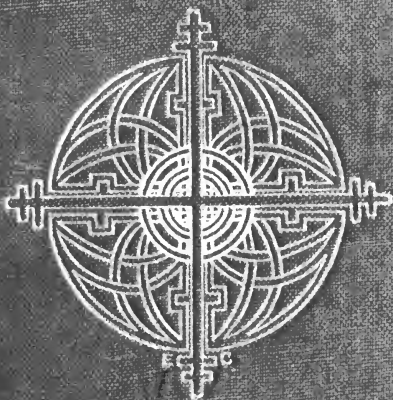


The Hermit of
Carmel
and other Poems.



George Santayana.



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A Hermit of Carmel



A Hermit of Carmel

And Other Poems

By

George Santayana

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
- A HERMIT OF CARMEL	3
- THE KNIGHT'S RETURN. A Sequel to A Hermit of Carmel	45
ELEGIAC AND LYRIC POEMS	83
Premonition	85
Solipsism	87
Sybaris	89
Avila	94
King's College Chapel	99
On an Unfinished Statue	107
Midnight	112
In Grantchester Meadows	114
- Futility	116
Before a Statue of Achilles	117
- Odi et Amo	120
- Cathedrals by the Sea	122
- Mont Brévent	123
The Rustic at the Play	124
- Resurrection	125

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	PAGE
TRANSLATIONS	139
From Michael Angelo	141
From Alfred de Musset: <i>Souvenir</i>	144
From Théophile Gautier: <i>L'Art</i>	156
CONVIVIAL AND OCCASIONAL VERSES	161
Prosit Neujahr	163
Fair Harvard	164
College Drinking Song	167
Six Wise Fools	170
Athletic Ode	185
The Bottles and the Wine	192
The Poetic Medium	198
Young Sammy's first Wild Oats	204
Spain in America	216
Youth's Immortality	232

A HERMIT OF CARMEL

A HERMIT OF CARMEL

SCENE. — *A ravine amid the slopes of Mount Carmel.*

On one side a hermitage, on the other a rustic cross. The sun is about to set in the sea, which fills the background.

HERMIT. Thou who wast tempted in the wilderness,
Guard me this night, for there are snares in sleep
That baffle watching. O poisoned, bitter life
Of doubt and longing ! Were death possible,
Who would not choose it ? But that dim estate
Might plunge my witless ghost in grosser matter
And in still closer meshes choke my life.
Yet thus to live is grievous agony,
When sleep and thirst, hunger and weariness,

And the sharp goads of thought-awakened lust
Torture the flesh, and inward doubt of all
Embitters with its lurking mockery
Virtue's sad victories. This wilderness
Whither I fly from the approach of men
Keeps not the devil out. The treacherous glens
Are full of imps, and ghosts in moonlit vesture
Startle the watches of the lidless night.
The giant forest, in my youth so fair,
Is now a den of demons ; the hoarse sea
Is foul with monsters hungry for my soul ;
The dark and pregnant soil, once innocent
Mother of flowers, reeks with venomous worms,
And sore temptation is in all the world.
But hist ! A sound, as if of clanking hoofs.
Saint Anthony protect me from the fiend,
Whether he come in guise of hornèd beast
Or of pernicious man ! If I must die
Be it upon this hallowed ground, O Lord !

[Hides in the hut.]

Enter a young KNIGHT.

KNIGHT [*reining in his horse*].

Rest, Albus, rest. — Doth the sun sink in glory

Because he sinks to rise? —

Breathe here a space ; here bends the promontory,

There Acra's haven lies.

Those specks are galleys waiting for the gale

To make for Christian shores.

To-morrow they will fly with bellying sail

And splash of swinging oars,

Bearing us both to where the freeman tills

The plot where he was born,

And belfry answers belfry from the hills

Above the fields of corn.

Thence one less sea to traverse ere we come

Where all our hopes abide,

One truant journey less to end in home,

Thy mistress, and my bride. [*He dismounts.*]

Good Albus, 't is enough for one day's riding.

Here shall our bivouac be.

Surely by that green sward some brook is hiding

To welcome thee and me.

Yes, hark ! Its laugh betrays it. Graze thou there,

Nor fear the camp's alarms.

*[Lets the horse go and turns, perceiving the
cross on the hillside.*

See where a cross, inviting me to prayer,

Outspreads its sacred arms.

O first of many that mine eyes shall see

On altar, tomb, and tower,

Art thou the last of crosses come to me

Before my guerdon's hour ?

Or first or last, and by whatever hands

Here planted in the wild,

Hail to thee, cross, that blessest in far lands

Thy champion and thy child.

*[Goes up to the cross and kneels before it.
The angel of the Lord appeared to Mary
And she conceived of the Holy Ghost.*

[Continues silently.

HERMIT [*from within*].

All's quiet. God hath made the danger pass.

[*Comes out.*]

Nay, hold ! A horse without a rider here ?

Perchance a devil, come, if I should mount him,

To gallop with me into yawning hell.

Yet he looks gentle, munching the young grass,

The tempting bridle looped about his neck.

I will go catch him. When the traders pass —

And they pass after Christmas — I will barter

The beast for a good cloak. The winter's blasts

Are on us.

KNIGHT. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.*

Be't done to me according to thy word —

[*Continues silently.*]

HERMIT. A voice ! A Christian voice ! Some wingèd
angel

Floats through the ether, magnifying God.

Merciful heaven ! There, ay, there he kneels

Before the cross I planted. 'T is the cross

That to earth brings down heaven. Yes, Saint
Michael,

For he is clad in arms, and his casque fringed
With the bright nimbus of his golden hair.

Yet he seems wingless ; if he stirs a limb
The heavy armour clangs. No angel, surely ;
Rather Saint George, with steed and magic lance
Returned to fight against the infidel.

KNIGHT. *And the Word was made flesh and dwelt
among us.* [Continues silently.

HERMIT. Listen ! they speak my native tongue in
heaven.

Those are the words my sainted mother spake —
Nightly she crooned them, teaching Palmerin
His orisons. [The KNIGHT rises.

Come, shall I challenge him?

No : I am foul. I will hide crouching here
And spy him as he goes.

KNIGHT. What stirreth there?

[Pushes a branch aside.

HERMIT [*falling on his knees*].

Have mercy, glorious Saint ! a sinful man

Lives in this hovel ; no man's enemy

Except his own. Sir, spare an anchorite.

KNIGHT. Fear nothing, holy man. I am a Christian

Although no saint, but sinful more than thou

Who in the desert livest near to God.

My sword is stained with blood, my heart is rash,

And if my youth is free from foul dishonour

'Tis God's good mercies hedge my wayward days

And marvellously guide me through the world.

But thou art surely wise. In solitude

The mind of the Most High possesseth men,

And they whom sorrow chaseth from the world

Learn in their grief the purposes of heaven.

God's hand appears in this, that here I find thee

To shrive me, father. Many months I roam

Through heathen wilds in sorry need of shrift.

Who knows if in some luckless fray to-morrow

I bite the dust, or in that golden sea

Perish unknelled and far from Christendom?
A soldier's soul should be like his bright blade
Ready to unsheathe.

HERMIT. O music of high thoughts!
O harmony of long-forgotten words!
Fair visitation! In her youth the soul,
Gathering the heavy heritage of Adam,
Looks with strange horror on her own abyss
And on the stars, and her increasing knowledge
Ever increaseth sorrow; yet with years,
Touching the depths and wholly mortified,
She sees her desert bloom with mystic flowers
And sweeter smiles of God. O mortal bosom
Both in foreboding and in hope beguiled!
Not where I fancied in my night of trouble
Dawns comfort on mine eyes, but wondrously.
Whence camest thou? Tell me what princely house
And fruitful country bred and nurtured thee.

KNIGHT. 'Tis not a fruitful land. On heathered hills
My father fed his flocks. We gazed not down

On vineyard slopes and waters blue as these
But there a sea of swaying tree-tops spread
Boundless beneath us, without path or tower,
Save where beside the river's bend the monks
Had built their cells and cleared the wood away.
We called it milking time when we could hear
The distant music of their matin chimes.

HERMIT. Be your monks rich?

KNIGHT. Their fields are ploughed and brown,
But the poor upland shepherd has no corn ;
His flock must feed him with its milk and flesh,
Unless he snare a partridge in the wood
As I did oft, or standing in the brook
Where the green water eddies in the pool
Enmesh the foolish fishes.

HERMIT. Never shepherd
Could bear these arms or show this courtesy.
Where wast thou bred, if thou wast born a hind,
That thou art gentle? Who hath knighted thee?

KNIGHT. The Baron of the Marches is my liege ;

To him I owe my nurture and my sword,
And the sweet hope that leads me.

HERMIT.

Ah, the faith?

KNIGHT. Nay, that my mother gave me with her
prayers,

Saintliest of women.

HERMIT.

Thy mother and my own

Were then alike. Hast thou another hope
Sweeter than faith to thank thy master for?

KNIGHT. He hath a daughter for whose hand I serve,
Having her love ; and on the happy night
When I kept vigil o'er the virgin arms
In which I should be knighted at the dawn
He promised me her hand, if I proved worthy
In five years' service. At the morrow's mass
When we had both partaken of the Lord,
I knelt before him, and while all his vassals
Stood in a ring about us, up he rose
And with his flat sword struck my shoulder thus,
Speaking these words, now graven on my heart :

“ Arise, Sir Knight, to battle with the world
For God and honour. If in youth thou fall,
May thy bright soul take instant wing to heaven,
But if thou blazon on this argent shield
Valorous deeds, and come in safety back,
Thy worth shall stand in lieu of ancient blood,
For valour was the first nobility,
And with the blessing of a hapless man
Whom three brave sons, reversing nature’s sentence,
Condemned to mourn them, I will then deliver
My daughter to thy hands. She and her honour,
My lands, my castle, and my name be thine.”
Love is the hope, sweeter than faith in heaven,
For which I toil in arms.

Enough of that.

Methinks thou art a priest, and ere I leave thee
I fain would make confession of what sins
Lie on my soul.

HERMIT. God knoweth what they are,
And hath, methinks, forgiven them already,

For by the candour of thy looks I know
Thou livest in his grace. But tell them o'er,
For by the speaking of a word the heart
Is lightened of its burden : and the Lord
Commissioned us to listen in his name
To all men's woes, and counsel and forgive.
Therefore say on.

KNIGHT. Alas, where all is frail
I know not with what sorrow to begin.
If I could keep the thought of God alive
I might live better ; but my wit is loose
And wanders into silly dreams awake,
All to no purpose. Everything that stirs
Sets me athinking of its life and ways
And I forget my own. If a frog jump,
Or busy squirrel run across my path,
Or three sad crows fly cawing through the wood,
Or if I spy a fox's trail, or print
Of deer's foot in the mould — off go my thoughts
And I am many leagues in fairy land

Before I shake away the lethargy
And say to my weak soul, Thou art a knight,
What hast thou done to-day?

HERMIT. Be these thy sins?

KNIGHT. Nay, not the chief. For in all exercise,
Or when in any test or feat of arms
I meet another, not the worthy cause,
The thought of God, my liege, or beauteous mistress
Strengthens my arm, but the mere rage and pride
Of the encounter sweeps my soul along,
And win I must, whatever goal it be,
When I am once engaged. That 's in the blood.
So were our heathen fathers wont to fight
Merciless battles. But glory is the Lord's
Who metes with measure. Still I stumble there.
And envy, too, I often sin in that,
For from my childhood up I never brooked
A swifter runner, or a quicker eye
To hit the mark, and what another does
Better than I, that still I strive to do

Till he be worsted. Else I cannot sleep.

HERMIT. Thou knowest, child, that victory is God's
To give and to deny. He gives it thee :
'Tis proof of thy deserving. Use it well,
Which if thou do, to crave the victory
In thee, a soldier, is no grievous sin.
But hast thou not more special sins than these,
No wrong, no murder?

KNIGHT. Murder have I none,
If murder be to kill a man by stealth
Or in a private quarrel, but in war
I oft have slain my man. I wear a sword
Though nature gave me not a butcher's hand
That loves to use it. — Oh, 't is marvellous
How men will slaughter for the sake of blood,
And Christians too. Before I crossed the sea,
The Margrave fought a battle in the north
Against the heathen. I then followed him,
And when the fight was over and the foe,
Routed, had fled into a deep morass

Black 'neath the splendours of a fiery sky,
The bugle called us back : and back I rode,
My shield slung on my back, my visor up,
Saying the Angelus, such peace there was
Beneath the twilight heavens, when a groan
That seemed the ending of a soul in pain
Made me look down ; there lay a heathen knight,
And on his wounded breast a Christian crouched,
Stabbing him still ; I snatched the villain's sword,
But just in time, and seized him by the throat
Amazed, and loud with oaths ; "Thou slave," quoth I,
"Why wilt thou send a valiant soul to hell,
That might be saved for heaven? The man is mine.
Take thou his armour, if some happy chance
Have made thee victor. But outrage not the cause
Which thou wouldst well defend." We stripped the
man,

Whose gaping wounds were deep and hard to staunch
With the few strips remaining of my tunic
Torn in the fight ; and as he could not sit,

We needs must lift and bear him in our arms
Back to the camp. He was a knight indeed,
And when, his fever passing, I explained
Our holy faith — (our chaplains spoke not well
His northern tongue) — he listened open-eyed
As a child might, and when I stopped and asked,
“Dost thou believe?” he gazed and said: “I do.
As thou believest, so in life and death
Will I believe.” — So humble was his soul
And open to the sudden grace of heaven.
Yet him my Christian ruffian would have slain
To see the red blood ooze. 'T is pitiful !
And yet I do him wrong. The fellow came
The morning after, shy, with heavy looks,
And said he begged to bring the armour back.
It was not his, he had not felled the knight
But found him on the ground ; and when I bade him
Retain the proffered sword, to use it better,
He sobbed aloud, and bathed my hands in tears,
So hearty was his grief. — But I confess

Another's sins, good father, and forget
My own, which I should tell of.

HERMIT.

Trouble not

To tell them over, for I know them now.

They are the same which seen in other men
'The world calls virtues. But one vice there is
Which noblest natures in their youth are prone to.
Hast thou offended against chastity?

KNIGHT. Ah, father, I am guilty too in that,
If whosoever looketh on a woman
Unholily, already hath committed
Adultery in his heart. 'T is in my thoughts,
Perhaps, that I have sinned ; but I am young,
And have from childhood loved one noble maid.
All other faces are but mirrors to me
Of what she is in truth. When others smile
And seem to say that haply they could love me,
My heart yearns to them, yet its yearning goes
Like incense past a picture, to her spirit.
They are memorials of her I review

'To make me constant. Nay, but that's not all.
A heavy season comes, — I know not whether
At waxing or at waning of the moon, —
When but the babble of a girlish voice
Heard from a window, or a hand stretched forth,
Or a chance motion, stops the beating heart
Here in my breast, and melts my very soul,
And I stand there bewitched, my brain benumbed,
And nothing in me but the fell desire
To do I know not what. — 'Tis dreams, dreams,
dreams,
And they are evil, treacherous, and base
When they come so. One day on every side
They girt me round. I cried to them "For shame!"
They would not go nor quit tormenting me
Till I put spurs into my steed, and rode,
Rode with clenched teeth, hacking all branches
off
Within my axe's compass. When I stopped
My soul was free: "We have outridden them,

Albus," I cried, "the demons of that place
Of foul enchantment ! Here 's the blue again
Smiling upon us, God, and all his saints."

Father, methinks the agony of death
May happen so. A stifling darkness comes
Upon the feeble soul, and doubtfully
She keeps her strength alive on far-off hopes
In that great stress of anguish. But it passes
And slowly we awake in paradise.

HERMIT. In paradise, my son, when thou awakest
If I still suffer in the lake of fire
Make me some prayerful alms, who in the name
Of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
Absolve thee now.

KNIGHT. And for my penance, father,
What lay you on ?

HERMIT. Three *Aves* for three days
Say for the soul of one unlike thyself
Though of thy country. Robbers bore him thence
Into their kingdoms. Hast thou never heard

Tell of the hordes that ravaged Christendom
Ere thou wast born, belike.

KNIGHT. Nay, I remember.

'T was then my mother brought me from the hills
To dwell beside the castle, for the Huns
Had slain my father and my elder brother
And driven the sheep away.

HERMIT. The Huns? The Huns?

KNIGHT. Ay, when they ravaged all the land about
Upon their western march.

HERMIT. They slew thy brother?
Thou sawest his body?

KNIGHT. Nay, we saw it not.
We fled, and many fearful weeks were past
Ere we returned to search.

HERMIT. The Lord is great.

Thy brother's name was —

KNIGHT. Damian.

HERMIT. God of mercies,
What shall become of us !

KNIGHT. Thy gaze is fixed.

What ails thee? Rest thee there.

HERMIT. I cannot speak.

I faint. Since dawn I have not tasted food.

A draught! A morsel! Ah, my end is near.

KNIGHT. I have a panier by my saddle-bow
With food. — Albus has wandered down the glade. —

I shall be here anon. [*Exit.*

HERMIT. What bodes this portent?

My practised soul well knows the things of earth,

And there is none like this. Impossible.

This is some essence metaphysical,

And not the thing it seems. So much is sure ;

But whether fiend or minister of grace

How shall I know? Is he a subtle demon

And wins my ear? I am the devil's pawn.

Is he an angel and I put him by?

Then I am damned for that. All other sins

Shall be forgiven, save such blasphemy

Against the Holy Ghost. And being dead

Might not my brother's spirit come from heaven?
And though I be unworthy in my sins
Of saintly visitation, I believe
This vision is from God. 'Tis beautiful
And clothed in Christian speech and charity.
Was not Mount Carmel, Lord, thy haunt of old
Where men went up to meet thee? Show thy face.
The Apostles at Emmaus knew the Lord
When he broke bread. Blind heart, an angel comes
To sup with thee to-night. Misknow him not.
The ravens of Elijah, who were black,
Came from the Lord, and Raphael himself
Who led the lost Tobias by the hand
Was black beside this vision's loveliness.
Yea, by its glory pale the three bright strangers
That from the desert came to Abraham's tent
In figure of the blessed Trinity. —

What am I raving? Am I Abraham,
Tobias, or Elijah, that the gods
Should visit me? Did not the artful devil

Come to Saint Anthony in beauteous form?
When first this ghost approached I dreaded him, —
A certain sign. Yet by his subtle wiles,
Flattering my earthly hopes, he vanquished me
And quieted my doubts — as if Beelzebub
Could not feign piety to murder souls!
What, my young brother, whom I counted dead,
Found in this shape, a knight, a Paladin,
A vision such as minstrels sing about?
Palpable lie, abominable snare
The demon mocks me with! Let me but cry,
“I am thy brother, I am Damian,”
Let me but clasp his knees and with a flood
Of joyful penitential childish tears
Water his feet, and then look up again
To drink the grace of his benignant eyes
And by his kiss be healed in soul and body,
And I shall see the grinning demon's self
And feel that icy manacle, his claw,
Clasping my wrist for ever. “Thou art damned,

Damned," shrieks the fiend, "damned in believing
lies,

Damned in renouncing for a dreamful joy
Thy solitude and penance. Thou art damned."

Yes, 't is a hellish plot confronts me here.

A knight, my brother, come to comfort me !

'T is madness and wild dreams. — Again he comes.

His gesture says, Here 's food. Pitiful heaven,

Assist me now. Let me not now be lost.

Suffer my vigils and perpetual fasts

To strengthen my resolve. To be so happy

Were rash, and ah, how vain ! To drown their sorrow

Fools barter heaven for a drunkard's joy.

Re-enter KNIGHT.

KNIGHT. Drink this. 'T is water from the virgin
springs

Of Carmel, pure and cold. Stains of the world

That leave the heavens clean leave earth's own heart

Immaculate. 'T is but her outer garment

That man and roving beast avail to smear.

The curse of Adam stops at living things
And Nature sleeps untainted. There is healing
In such a fountain draught. Taste of this bread.
Acorns I also bring and well-dried figs.
Take freely : there is plenteous store for both.
For often as I ride a village through
Or tighten as I start from hostelries
My horse's girth, the hospitable dame
Or her young daughter brings me something forth
From the rich larder, now a loaf or fowl
And now a goat-skin full of seasoned wine.
God prompts their kindly hearts and makes them
 bounteous
Lest my strength fail me ere my journey's end,
Who knows how distant yet. — Come, break thy fast.
Remember, father, this is Christmas Eve
When angels, joining in the songs of earth,
Make mortals joyful, knowing their painful flesh
Allied to deity.
HERMIT. I crave no food.

KNIGHT. Nay, nay, thy faintness called for it but now.

HERMIT. Not hunger gave that cry but wonderment.

KNIGHT. At my poor brother's name?

HERMIT. Thy brother lives.

KNIGHT. Where? Dost thou know him? In this
Holy Land?

HERMIT. Poor Damian of the Marches! Verily
His sins are scarlet. Pray for him, fair Knight,
But seek not to discover his abode.

If thou shouldst find him he would die of shame
For bringing shame upon thee.

KNIGHT. Hast thou seen him
Or is it slander of a gossip's mouth
That now usurps thy tongue? If he be fallen
He hath the greater need of charity
And some late succour.

HERMIT. Through long wanderings
We never once were parted. In his youth
I deemed him honest, loved him as myself,
Nor doubted he should richly thrive and prosper

Amongst the sons of men. But day by day
The hand of opportunity unmasked
The sleeping guilt within. Envy and greed,
Pitiless malice, pride, and wantonness
Started like lion's cubs that scent their prey
And roared increasingly. Time drew aside
Veil after veil that cloaked his villainy,
Till looking on his stark and naked soul
I stood aghast and trembled.

KNIGHT. God, that made us,
Engraved his sacred image in our hearts
Deeper than cruel eyes may boast to pierce.
Has not my brother too a priceless soul
For which Christ died? Did God not ransom it?
Yes, I will find him, lift him to my breast
And say, "Forget the past. Thy home is here."
HERMIT. Beware ! Didst thou embrace him he would
die,
And he hath grievous penance yet to do
Ere he be ripe for heaven. In purgatory

The pains are doubly sharp and manifold
With which our guilt is cleansed. Forbear to search.

KNIGHT. This ministration is a task that heaven
Now lays upon me. Hinder not his weal.
What better battle could approve my courage
Than in a brother's soul to fight despair?
If I could bring that brother back to life
Long dead to me, and dead, it seems, to God,
Were 't not a deed of Christian chivalry
To win my lady by? Father, I pray thee,
Where is my brother now?

HERMIT. A mystery
Enshrouds his penance. Vain to question more.
A secret vow on which salvation hangs
Lies between him and all men.

KNIGHT. Marvellous !
Where hath he roamed, what nameless sin committed
That I may not embrace him?

HERMIT. Listen, Knight,
For I may tell thee that ; and when thou knowest

The sins he shrives and what his penance is,
Assist him with thy charitable prayers
To bear his cross, but lift it not away,
For with it goes his hope of paradise.

KNIGHT. There is indeed some mystery in this.
The pain of it doth weigh upon thy soul
Even in the telling.

HERMIT. Did his own pale lips
Read from the branded tablets of his heart
The record of his sorrows, they could never
More truly speak than I, for all his woes
I knew, and inly felt them as my own.
Would that some ruffian knife had gashed his throat
On that foul day of slaughter, when thy mother
Bore thee afar to safety. Ah, how near
Salvation hung that day above his head !
But wondrously, as Isaac once was spared,
Some voice he heard not stayed the murderous hand,
Then dealing death abroad ; and from that mercy
The dreadful brood of all his torments sprang.

They bound his wrists with painful twisted thongs
And drove him with the flocks and captive women
Into their camp, across the smouldering heaps
Of burning rubbish and through sulphurous fumes.
That night he found him tied behind a cart —
The crawling palace of that savage chief
Whose greed had saved him. Shivering he stood,
For they had stripped him, through the starlight
hours,
And found no piteous orb less bright above him
For looking on his grief. Alas, his soul
Entered that night into the maze of hell.
For gazing on those stars and on the corpses
Of all he loved and knew, mangled and bare,
Upbraiding heaven with their lidless eyes,
And heaven's eyes still smiling back at them,
He said to his cold heart, "There is no God."
And when the rosy dawn with jocund seeming
Gilded the valley as if naught had chanced,
He, like the morning, banished grief and love,

And in his vain and cruel heart repeating
“There is no God,” arose to greet the sun.

They took him to a village by a stream,
And in the market sold him to a Jew,
A long-robed man, who stroked thy brother's hair —
'T was flaxen then and silken as thy own —
And chuckled as he hurried him away
Into a galley, by the margin moored.
They voyaged long, until they reached a vast
And splendid city. Egypt's sunken shore
Stretches behind it, and before its walls
Pharos, by day a pillar and by night
A flaming beacon, greets the mariner.
'T is Satan's capital. If holy men
Have dwelt within it, teaching all the Church,
That was of old. Now Saracens and Jews
Possess it wholly. There no Christian thrives,
But every monstrous and lascivious crime
Findeth a palace or a den to hide it.
There did thy brother waste his youth, a slave,

And no unwilling service did he render
To every base command. His shepherd's skin,
Ruddy with mountain suns, they smoothed with
 unguents,
And bleached in pillared courts ; they shaved his hair,
Forbade him labour, save to hold a torch
While his young masters read, or at the banquet
To mix the lucent sherbets with the snows
Of Sinai's deepest gorge, or in the censer
To drop large incense-grains. He learned to sing
What songs of wine their ribald poets penned,
And all the witch of Lesbos raved of love.
The lute and timbrel in his skilful hands
They loved to place ; oft in their languid souls
His wild chant roused some savage memory
And their hearts leapt like leopards in the night
That prowl through broad Sahara. His delight
Was henceforth the choice morsel, the fat fee,
The subtle theft. He brought the gossip home
From the loud market, lest his lord should yawn

The morning long beneath the barber's hands,
Nor praise his wit and to the tittering group
Repeat his story. In the brothel streets
He ran sly errands, nor escaped in fear
If as he passed some wife of Potiphar
Plucked at his tunic. His best art it was
To know the cunning mixture of good wines
And poisons too, if some adulterous slave
Or long-lived uncle or importunate brother
Needed a poison.— Close about his soul
This bitter flood of luxury crept up
Until it choked him. He forgot the past
And blushed to be a Christian. Their vain prayers
He learned to mutter, and was circumcised.
Thrice in the day, and dawn and noon and eve,
He washed his feet and hands, a foolish rite
That left the soul still foul. Twice seven devils
Lodged in his body and tormented him,
And lust pursued him when all ways of lust
Were stale and sickened.

But there came an end.

For by the flesh as he had chiefly sinned,
So in the flesh he had his punishment.
Ulcers and boils, to make another Job,
Thickened upon him, and his beauty gone,
They drove him like a pest from all their gates
Among the lepers. Then he called on God.
Then he remembered all he once had heard
But understood not touching Calvary ;
And rising up, all naked as he was,
He plucked the stout stem of a bramble-bush
To be his palmer's staff, and with a rag
That once had been the blanket of a mule
Girded his loins, and stalked into the wild.

KNIGHT. And whither, father, whither did he go?

HERMIT. Mount Sinai first received him, on whose
crests

The Lord in the beginning reared his throne,
And from whose spurs and watered crevices
The children of Saint Anthony for ever

Pour praise and supplication. There he dwelt,
Recalling to his troubled memory
The precepts of the faith ; but from those haunts
He journeyed soon to deeper solitudes.

KNIGHT. Then he repented and is surely saved?

HERMIT. God grant it, son, God grant it for thy
sake.

'T is not a day can change the heart of man,
Though grace doth much. The ancient demons lurk
Still in their dark recesses, and at night,
Or in the idle moments when the soul
Breathes 'mid her travail, suddenly assail.
In the vast wilderness the starving eye
Spies many shapes that feed its lust. To me
The buzz of bees, the lizard's sunny sleep,
The snake's lithe coils are full of languishment.
Oh, how the base blood then assaults the heart
Crying, " Fool, fool, what were the life of heaven
Unless in heaven too the sun were warm
And the blood rose and all the passions flared,

Even as in worms compact of earth and fire
That lecherously writhe? Their goads and stings
Are in thy flesh, why not their ravishment? ”

They are strange shapes the devil sometimes takes.
There was a vine that crept along this wall,
Ancient and knotted ; far its branches spread
And with their leafy greenness made a bower
Over my cell. The juicy clusters hung
Not far above me, and the little birds
Chirped in the sun-flecked tangle all day long,
Hopping from twig to twig and carolling.
I sat and listened, and methought they said :
“ Bad hairy man, thou only in this world
Repinest, hater of thyself and us,
Thou art all nature’s single enemy.”
And with a doubt that cleft my heart in twain
I sat and pondered what they sang to me.
Then I looked up into the sunlit maze
Of that old vine, I breathed its subtle scent,
I watched its spotted shadows shift and change

With gusty murmurous tremblings of its leaves
And eager tendrils, curling through the air,
Until it seemed as if the thing had life
And was a devil stooping over me
With the obsession of his purring breath
Wooing me to perdition. But I laughed,
For I had dealt with imps of hell before.
I searched the stubble till I found two flints,
Sharp and with something like a cross upon them,
And straight about the vine's outspreading roots
Began to dig. A week, methinks, I dug
With secret joy, well knowing that in vain
The demon thought to ripen all his grapes.
His filthy roots, now dangling in the air,
Dried in the sun. In August fell the leaves,
And the dead branches with the autumn's flaw
Rotted and broke ; now, see, they feed my fire.
And when the Spring returns no silly birds
Will fret me with their singing. God be praise
That I could balk that devil : long he mocked

My lonely penance with his evil eye.

But others come anon ; and what I suffer

'T is very like thy brother suffers too.

KNIGHT. I cannot think so, father. Thou art weak

And long hast laid the hopes of youth aside.

Thou canst not love. My brother still is young —

HERMIT. Alas, if grief had multiplied his years !

KNIGHT. He yet can love, and any natural voice

Of wood or mountain, or perchance my own,

Might wake in him another better life

Of peace and happy hopes. We love the forest,

We who were nurtured in its magic depths.

Oft has it seemed as if God spoke to us

In the low voices of the prayerful boughs

That whisper nighest heaven.

HERMIT.

This false world

Is naught, my son, but what we make of it.

KNIGHT. Then I must think my brother loves the
woods

And hears God's message in their murmuring.

Had he dwelt here, a hermit like thyself,
He would have suffered that old vine to grow
And those blithe birds to sing. 'T is positive,
Else other blood than mine must fill his veins.
Oh, I will find him yet. — I leave thee, father.
Thou hast with heavy tidings and great hope
Burdened my soul. Now I must journey on.
I pray, thy blessing.

HERMIT. Kneel, thou happy stranger,
Kneel, for a vision comes into my heart
And I must prophesy. Thus saith the Lord :
“Thou shalt not know thy brother upon earth ;
My will forbids. But thou shalt pass him by,
And as Saint Peter’s shadow healed a man,
The passing of thee, by my grace and mercy,
Shall save thy brother’s soul.” This comfort take
And go thy ways.

KNIGHT. The will of God be done.
If not on earth, we yet may meet in heaven.

HERMIT. God grant it.

KNIGHT. May God keep thee.

HERMIT. Fare thee well.

KNIGHT [*sings as he goes*].

*The star stood still o'er Bethlehem
That showed the wise the way,
And where the shepherds sleeping lay
The angels sang to them :
Glory be to God on high
And peace on earth to men.*

HERMIT. Lord of Mount Carmel, hearken to my
prayer.

God of the hills, accept my sacrifice.

THE KNIGHT'S RETURN



THE KNIGHT'S RETURN

A SEQUEL TO A HERMIT OF CARMEL

SCENE.— *A wooded lawn before the gate of a castle.
In an arbour LADY FLERIDA and NURSE at their
handiwork.*

NURSE. The dews will soon be falling, Florida.
Come in, sweet lady.

FLERIDA. Hush ! 'T is early yet.

NURSE. 'T is time, methinks, to say the rosary.

FLERIDA. See the sun hanging o'er the darkened hills
Bright as the Host above the multitude
Of bending worshippers ! Tell thy beads here,
The congregation of these rustling leaves
Will answer all thy *Aves* patiently.

NURSE. I've dropped a stitch. I cannot see to work
'Neath trellises. These gentlefolk are mad.

The mistress of a castle sits without,
Like a poor homeless beggar !

FLERIDA. Nay, go in
And burn thy rush-light while the sun is shining,
Or, by the casement squinting, knit thy hose
While in these gilded clouds the seraphim
Are singing Glory. Go, I follow thee.

NURSE [*getting up to go*].

Alack, this rheum. Young bones will brave the cold
Till the twitch comes. — Trust me, 'tis hazardous,
Sweet child, to tarry here beyond the moat
Alone, when evening falls. Once at thy age
My mother sent me on a night like this
To good old Prior Bennet, at Saint Giles.
He was her uncle and a saintly man —
How well do I remember his grey beard ! —
She went to him for shrift, and on that day
She had a fainting turn : she had them oft

Till in the last, poor sainted soul, she died.
I needs must run and fetch him, for to die
Unreconciled was all my mother feared,
And but for that, she had so hard a life
She would have changed it any day for heaven,
And on the way ('t was scarce a rood from home)
An idle foul young lout that sauntered by
Griped at my frock — I tremble at it still —
Thank God, the Virgin willed that at the trice
Friar Peter (he was porter all that month)
Opened the gate to let two pilgrims out,
Bound, as they told us, for Jerusalem.
Else Heaven knows what had become of me,
Or whether I had ever had the face
To cheat my husband, as most wenches do,
Without confessing aught : for I am honest
If ever woman was.

FLERIDA. Go in, go in.

NURSE. Seest thou not I go? Can I make
haste

With these poor aching joints? Thou think'st thee
safe?

Remember Ulric in his dungeon plans
Vengeance upon you, and his friends abroad
Hatch plans for his deliverance. Thou a maid,
An orphan, friendless, with these ill-paid men
Guarding thy walls, what dost thou fading here?
Who knows but he is dead, thy pretty knight?
His time is up. Were he alive and true
He had spurred home, hearing thy father's death,
To claim thee and make good his heritage.
Fie on this fondness, girl! It had been wiser
To yield to Ulric. Was it not his place
To guard thee? Led he not thy father's men?
Ah, better be his wife, rich, safe, and loved,
Than wait for ever among enemies
For what will never come.

FLERIDA.

Poor soul, go in.

The five years are not passed, and if they were
And I had ocular proof that he was dead,

Ulric should not be master in these walls.
But I should open arches in the tower
For bells to swing in, and the grass should grow
Upon the buried hinges of the draw.

Veiled we should walk within the garden-close,
And in the dimmed hall chant our psalmodies
With the frail voice of nuns. So get thee gone,
And summon better counsel to thy heart
Than quavers on thy lips. Go light thy taper,
And pray for the safe-coming of thy liege.

NURSE. I go. But thou, sweet lady, linger not.
The victuals will grow cold, as many a night
They have, since summer makes the twilight long
And thou com'st late to supper. — Ah, poor bones !

[*Exit.*

FLERIDA.

Day wanes : full summer's hanging in the air.

Oh, tarry not, my own.

See ! the first withered leaf is fallen there

And I am here alone.

Hath not my sorrow magic o'er thy breast?

Hath not my weary plight

The wings of love to fly into thy nest

And reach thee in the night?

Come to me, Palmerin. Thy trial's o'er,

Thy knightly vow fulfilled.

Come before winter chokes the ways, before

My inmost soul is chilled.

Where dost thou wander? From what lonely moor

Dost thou salute this sun?

Forget'st thou in gay courts what I endure?

Lov'st thou some happier one?

Weak woman! Can my doubting heart not wait

While his true heart can fight?

Why should I falter while he fronts his fate,

Or mourn while he doth right?

Keep him, great world, till the white shield he bore

Be blazoned rich in pride.

Fear not to echo, deserts, he's no more,

If he have nobly died.

Re-enter NURSE ; later HUGH, a page.

NURSE. Run hither quickly, mistress. Hasten in
And bid them raise the bridge. Some horsemen
climb

The western hill. Make haste, or all is lost.
Young Hugh espied them from the northern tower,
And gave us warning.

FLERIDA. Heaven hears my prayer.

NURSE. Madness. Come in. I prithee hasten, Hugh.
She 'll take thy word, though she mistrusts my oath
Who never lied to her in all these years
That I have served her, and her mother, too,
Long before she was thought of. Speak, boy, speak.
Assure thy mistress that a host arrives.

HUGH. A single knight, my lady, clad in arms.

FLERIDA. Young, with fair locks?

HUGH. He had his helmet on.

FLERIDA. Saw'st thou his shield?

HUGH. It bore a rich device,
But what I know not.

FLERIDA.

Came he mounted well?

HUGH. Right well, on a white steed. But at the
turn

Dismounted, and now leads the charger up.

NURSE. O God, 't is he ! I know him by that sign.

He always did so. [*A bugle is heard in the distance.*]

FLERIDA. God be my strength ! Answer the bugle,
Hugh.

Thy master's call. It is Sir Palmerin.

Again, again. — Summon the men-at-arms

And fetch my father's sword, his helm and shield,

That, with the great keys, I deliver them

To him whose right they are. [Exit HUGH.

The day is come,

Merciful God, the day is come at last.

NURSE. Runnest thou not to meet him? Flyest thou not?

Oh, if I could, I'd rush to kiss his hands

Full half-way down the steep. Alas ! these bones.

FLERIDA. I, who have waited for him five long years,

May well be patient now. Here let him find me
Where last we parted, at the castle gate.

*Re-enter HUGH, men-at-arms, and attendant, bearing
some pieces of armour.*

NURSE. Oh, I must weep for joy! See, where he
comes,

Not so much changed but I should know him still
Among a thousand. Such a pretty child
As the knight was, and such a roguish boy!
Can this be Palmerin? Who could have fancied
That he should ever be this stalwart man?

*Enter SIR PALMERIN, who, seeing the lady FLERIDA,
who remains motionless, goes to kneel before her.*

PALMERIN. Lady, hast thou forgotten Palmerin?

FLERIDA. Were memory dead, that voice would
waken it.

PALMERIN. What mean these weeds, these arms?

FLERIDA. That thou, my liege,
Art master in this castle.

PALMERIN.

Ah, thy father —

How long have we been orphaned, Florida?

FLERIDA. Ten moons have shed their light upon his
grave.

PALMERIN. Oh, more than father —

FLERIDA.

And thou more than son

Wast ever to him. He remembered thee

With his last breath, and bade me, when thou camest,

Render his arms, his vassals, and his towers

Into thy hand. My lord, receive the keys. [*Kneels.*

PALMERIN [*raising her*].

How gladly, if these keys unlock thy heart,

Dear lady. For my prize is not these walls,

Nor these stout men and honourable arms.

'T was not for them I served the Emperor

In many a battle waged in heathen lands.

'T was in the hope of what no strength of arm

Nor kingly favour, without grace of thine,

Could win for any man. If thou canst love me,

I take all else to do thee homage with ;

But if thy heart, in my long absence won
By some more worthy suitor, would withdraw,
Keep the rest too, for to be wretched in
I have this whole vast world for heritage.

FLERIDA. My hand and heart my father plighted thee
Upon the morning when he dubbed thee knight.
Both shall be true. If other ground were lacking,
My father's choice were ground enough for love.

PALMERIN. Nay, let not duty and thy father's will
Force thee to wed me. Bid thy heart pronounce.

FLERIDA. A holy love is not the fancy's choice.

A mother cherishes the child she bore,
Nature's dear gift, bestowed with many a pang
And weary vigil and sweet fluttering joy
That flies over a sea of brooding care.

A father is not chosen but revered,
For God appointed him. 'Tis destiny,
And no man's wayward will, binds brothers, kindred,
And childhood's friends in everlasting bonds.
Our native land we chose not, nor our king,

Nor our first sovereign, God. All sacred ties
Are woven round us by the hand of heaven
And therefore bear us up. Let homeless traitors
Reject their lot, like fallen Lucifer
Wretched 'neath every sky ; let the false rabble
Change with the moon its despicable chiefs ;
Let the vain fop and goaded libertine
Pick their poor pleasures, and adulterous spirits
Pursue a phantom down the drifts of hell.
But we will breathe the air that quickened us
And see by this same light that gave us eyes,
Here rooted where God sowed us, flowering here
Where we have grown, making our constancy
A pivot for this wheeling universe.
Ah ! 't is a fickle and unholy fondness
Springs from caprice of will. Who doteth once
May dote again, for who shall fetter fancy?
As thou couldst bare thy breast to fortune's arrows
Undaunted, for thy hope was all in God
And life or death must crown it, so my bosom,

Enshrining his good gifts, is satisfied
And cannot speak again. Him heaven gave me
Shall be my lord and my unchangeable love.

PALMERIN. O constant lady! Let me then thank
 heaven,

That graced me with the treasure of thy troth.
Rejoice with me, my comrades. Say no more
That time has parted us, and devious chances
Governed our lives. How now, is this good Carl?
And little Hugh, so grown? And thou, old gossip,
Goes thy rheum better now the season warms?
But where is Ulric?

FLERIDA. Thou shalt know anon.
First bid the people give us leave awhile.

PALMERIN. Make ready, then; we follow you.

[Exeunt all save PALMERIN and FLERIDA.]

Dear saint,

Is this a vision or a waking truth
In which I see thee, smiling on my hopes,
As only visions smile on Jack-a-dreams?

How often have I dreamt between two battles
Thou stoodest thus above me in the dusk
Half joy, half courage !

FLERIDA. Haply 't was my prayer,
For prayer hath wings to travel in the night.

PALMERIN. Didst thou remember

FLERIDA. Not as others pray.
What need of blessings to protest I loved thee,
When benediction rose with every breath
From my dumb heart to thee? Awake, adream,
In woodland rambles or in household tasks,
I moved in thy love's presence as in God's,
One deity to me.

PALMERIN. How undeserving,
Fair angel, are my merits of thy love !
How could I win it !

FLERIDA. Ah, if God can love thee,
Why should a mortal give a cause for love?

PALMERIN. They say God loves us all.

FLERIDA. Such pitying love

Is his alone who knows the unsullied spirit
Shrouded at birth beneath this fleshly coil,
And can divine the stature of that virtue
Each yet might climb to. But in thee declared
Shine, Palmerin, the hopes of all the world.
What God beheld and destined when he called thee
Out of the void, he granted me to see
First through the haze of maiden dreams and now
With the deep glance of woman.

PALMERIN.

Then in sooth

'T was no vain fancy, as the learned say,
That made thy silent presence cross my path
Where'er I turned, for if I slept my dream
Painted thy smile, and when the vision fled
The sunlit fountain met me with thy gaze.
If the birds chirruped, it was *Flerida*,
And *Flerida* if any minstrel sang.
Thy mien was in the lilies, the thin clouds
Contrived thy garments' fashion, and thy courage
Breathed from the mountains to renew my soul.

Ad taught thy blithe soul singing.

PAMERIN.

Florida,

Though I should give thee all my life and blood,

My honour and immortal soul, 't were nothing

But what thou gavest first, and rendering all

I yet should owe thee this sweet privilege

Of having lived and loved thee.

Re-enter NURSE.

NURSE.

Loitering still?

Come, come, the supper's spoiling.

FLORIDA [*pointing to the castle*]. Wilt thou take

Possession of thy poor inheritance?

PAMERIN. 'Tis poor indeed, a case without its
jewel,

Till thou be mine.

FLORIDA. Thou hast my plighted troth.

PAMERIN. Ah, pay the debt! my heart has waited
long.

FLORIDA. No priest is in attendance, Palmerin.

Till thou be duly summoned and arrive

I am my father's hostage in thy hands
Entrusted to thy love and chivalry.

PALMERIN. I long have bivouacked, lady, 'neath the
stars,

And I shall better rest beneath their light
While I am still an exile from thy bosom.
Let me not change the canopy of heaven
Except for heaven's self. Before this shrine
I watched my virgin arms on the proud eve
Of my first knighting. On this prouder vigil
Let me hold silent session with my heart
Again before this altar, keeping watch
Over this sweeter boon, my virgin bride
To be to-morrow mine.

FLERIDA [*to the NURSE*]. Bid them bring hither
Some wine and morsels for Sir Palmerin,
And torches, and their lutes and dulcimers.

[*Exit NURSE.*]

PALMERIN. We sup to-night beneath a lovers' moon
Not quite at full.

FLERIDA. We sup beneath the stars
That never wane, though nether storms obscure
Their revolutions to the wistful eyes
Of mortals. So our love shall never wane
But when its fame on earth is heard no more,
Translated to the language of the skies,
It yet shall be a parcel of that joy
Which saves the world from baseness.

*Attendants with torches and musical instruments
enter, while others bring in supper.*

SONG.

*Come make thy dwelling here
Where all sweet pleasures are.
For many a weary year
From mates and lady dear
Thou wanderest afar.
Come make thy dwelling here
Beneath love's golden star.*

*The battles' stress is o'er
That should thy worth approve.
Oh, follow now no more
The ruby star of war
That onward still must move.
Fixed shines above thy door
The golden star of love.*

PALMERIN. Florida,
What solace had thy orphaned life for thee
In this fair desert? Was not Ulric here
To lend thee succour?

FLERIDA. He was here, alas !

PALMERIN. Alas?

FLERIDA. That he proved false.

PALMERIN. I marvel. Speak.

FLERIDA. Ah me ! A sorry tale. — He said the castle
As to my father's second came to him ;
That I within it, as the world would think,
Must be his also. Doubtless thou wast dead,

Else tidings would have come. To save my honour
I must not wait, but bend to be his wife.

PALMERIN. Said Ulric so, that brave and trusty man?
Only some madness could transform his soul
So utterly.

FLERIDA. I question not the cause,
I mark the deed and brand the infamy.
When he had spoken and beheld me firm,
The coward threatened force. We were alone
And he unarmed ; it was a woman's body,
Not a man's soul, he thought to cope withal.
My father's sword was hanging by the wall :
I drew the blade, and as he rushed to snatch it
Transfixed his body ; at my feet he fell
Writhing ; I cried for help. Then Gunther came
And the young Hugh. I published his offence,
And when the torment and the fever passed,
For my poor strength had left some breath in him,
Fettered and manacled they brought him forth
Into the hall, before my men-at-arms

And the red witness of his own foul blood
Staining the hearthstone ; and I spoke and said :
“ Unhappy Ulric, traitor to thy liege,
Whom on the cross thou tookest oath to serve,
Thou shalt await his sentence. When he comes
He shall know all and will decree thy forfeit.
But if he come not, thou shalt live in chains
Till God and death restore thy liberty.”

PALMERIN. Is he still captive?

FLERIDA. In the northern tower,
Whence Hugh but now, whom Christian charity
Prompts oft to visit our sad prisoner,
Saw thee approach. Ulric has heard the news.

PALMERIN. Let him be brought.

FLERIDA [*to the men-at-arms*]. You hear my lord's
command. —

Ah, Palmerin, when Christ returns to earth
Only the good shall welcome him ; thy coming
Will bring thy faithless servant also joy,
For I foresee thy sentence.

PALMERIN. To be merciful

Is to be truly just. — Has he not mended
Or purged his sin in his captivity?

FLERIDA. Indeed, it seems he has. Hugh and the
friar

Who daily visits him both bring report
Of many pious and profound discourses
With which he charms away his solitude.
God grant his wisdom may outlive its cause
And not forsake him now. For, see, he comes.

Re-enter the men-at-arms, leading in ULRIC, bound.

PALMERIN. Ulric, it wounds my soul to see thee thus.
Undo the fetters. [ULRIC *is freed.*

What has chanced I know.

'T were idle to rehearse that history.

Only one matter, past my understanding,
I ask thee to confess: how came thy soul
To harbour thoughts so opposite to thine
And do thy nobleness this injury?

ULRIC. Alas! The saddest sorrow of the world

Is not foul sin, but that resplendent virtue
That yet brings evil on. 'T was nothing base,
Hideous, ignoble, or contemptible
That led me to my ruin, but the might
Of perfect sweetness, joy unthinkable,
And infinite deserts ; it was the hunger
For what most truly merits to be loved.
'T was love, my lord, the love of Florida
Which, in thy bosom waking heaven's choirs,
Brought hell into my breast. Was not her face
As fair for me as thee to look upon?
Was not her silver voice and high discourse
Potent with reason on my listening ears?
Why was it criminal in me to love
And in thee lawful? For we both were men,
And I the elder and the better born,
Who might have wooed and won her worthily.
Yet with no other crime than lucklessness,
Because her father and her constant soul
Lit first on thee, the tempest of my love

Wrecked honour, faith, fame, life, and hope of heaven,
Which, had the winds blown gently on my fortunes,
The self-same love had blessed and glorified.

PALMERIN. I pity thee ; but summon not thy love
To shield thy shame. Hadst thou been fortunate,
Should I with cunning and outrageous hand
Have moved against thy peace? Nay, by God's
mercy,

I should have gone my way, and patiently
In other worlds have justified my soul ;
For sorrow more religiously than love
Counselleth mortals.

ULRIC. Ah, I loved too much.

PALMERIN. Thou sayest well, Too much. Not that
thy love

In sweetness or in silent potency
Of grief surpassed or mine or any man's.
But finding in thy spirit no defence,
Love fattened on thy reason, drank thy will,
And quite consumed thy being ; growing great,

It left thee little, as, when a fiery wind
Devours the stubble, both together perish
And all goes out in shame. Water these ashes,
Ulric, with warm and consecrated tears,
That haply some new sweetness thence arise
Beneath another heaven. Though thou leave us,
Our hearts will not forget thee. In thy prayers
Remember us, and use thy freedom well.

ULRIC. I thank thee for thy counsel and thy mercy,
Generous knight. Not comfortless I go,
For not thy lips alone, well catechised,
Forgive me, Palmerin : thy heart forgives.
I would not use my freedom now to rove
But to ascend. A cloister's little earth
Is covered by the whole wide firmament.
Being changed within, there let me live and die
An anchorite, that I may outwardly
Become a breathing symbol and a hand
Pointing to heaven, become a lamp of love
And keep my spirit's sacrificial flame

Burning before the altar, till my blood,
Its living oil, to light refine its fire
And rise, by prayer transmuted, from this world.
And at this parting let me bless thee, lady,
Angel God chose to save me from my sin
Even by tempting me. For in the storm
And fury of my madness thy calm eyes
That unaware had called me, as the moon
Summons the leaping sea to follow her,
Soon with quick bolt and soul-transfixing ire
Awaked me from my dream. For who was I,
That I should lift me to so pure a being
Except in adoration, as the wave
That mirrors in its slimy breast the glory
Of some clear star, soon, grateful for that light,
Sinks, moaning, to its restless element.
So moaned I, in my dungeon's loneliness
And in that larger solitude, the world,
Where now no joy remained to beckon me.
I cried to Nature, questioned sun and moon,

At my cell's bars celestial visitants ;
Yes, I importuned my own soul to tell me
Whether a man be born to look on good
And straightway perish. Long I questioned fate.
No answer came from heaven to my doubts ;
But with the Spring and the reviving note
Of thrush and swallow, and the ploughman's song
Heard from the fields, I somewhat calmed my griefs,
And my heart took new counsel. Though a wave
Mirror a star and sink into the sea,
It cannot suffer ; though the summer fade
It shivers not at autumn ; though the spheres
Crash back to chaos they lament it not.
Never the blasted deserts of the moon
Mourned their lost verdure or implored reprieve.
But my loud heart-beats, self-contemplative,
Note their own weariness, and death foreknown
Makes life a grim and halting agony.
Yet something in me rides on circumstance
And swims the tide of change. How should that die

Which knows its dying, or that pine and fade
Which marks the shrivelled leafage of the year?
Can ashes choke that voice to lying silence
Which once has said: I love? That truth must live
Though unremembered, and that splendour shine
Though all eyes close in sleep. When first I loved
thee

Something immortal darted through my flesh
And made me godlike. Henceforth all of me
That loved thee, all of thee my puissant love
Hedging with worship rescued from the void
Lives in eternity, a part of God,
Who feeds with earth's unquenchable desire
The skies' ethereal altar, to whose flame
Passions are brands, thoughts smoke and frank-
incense,
Nations and worlds unceasing hecatombs.
There, growing one with all that ravished me,
I also burn and never cease from love.
Farewell, sweet lady. For thy pity thanks,

More thanks for thy disdain, but for thy beauty

Infinite thanks, for it was infinite

And, while it blinded most, unsealed mine eyes.

FLERIDA. Go in God's peace, and may he grant thee
grace

To see him always.

[*Exit* ULRIC.

Palmerin, this night

Brings me a surfeit and a cloud of joys.

I cannot seize them all. But many days

Will suck their drop of sweetness from this store,

And many silent nights and absences

Feed on its garnered bliss.

NURSE.

What, prattling still?

You 'll catch the ague and the chill of the fens,

And lolling in the moonlight, talking love,

You 'll die before the wedding. Come along.

PALMERIN. Sleep, Florida, falls sweetly on a heart

Freed from long doubt and anguish. Take thy rest.

Palmerin watches at thy castle gates

And all is well. Sleep, sleep, my Florida.

FLERIDA. Let me gaze long upon thee ere I go,
Lest, waking, I believe that I have dreamt
And weep anew and be disconsolate.

PALMERIN. Ah, were I only lying by thy side
At the first checking of thy peaceful breath,
To chase away that doubt before it grieved thee
And with two kisses close thy dreamful eyes !
Alas that we should meet to part, and love
Only to be divided !

FLERIDA. Palmerin,
Though thou hast faced the world and conquered it,
Thy noble heart is young. My briefer years
And lonely life have farther traced the thread
By which fate guides us through this labyrinth.
To learn to part, to learn to be divided,
We meet and love on earth ; to learn to die
Is the one triumph of the life of prayer.
Shall love be but to hug the mother's breast,
Or else run wailing ? To prolong for ever
The lovers' kiss, or pine for blandishments ?

Is the Lord's body but unleavened bread
Weighed with a baker's measure, or his blood
Wine to be drunk in bumpers? And shall love
Be reckoned in embraces, and its grace
Die with the taking of its sacrament?
These be but symbols to the eye of time
Of secrets written in eternity.

The love that fed must wean the nourished soul,
And through the dark and narrow vale of death
Send forth the lover lone but panoplied.

Else life were vain and love a moment's trouble
That, passing, left untenanted the void,

As summer winds a-tremble in this bower
Might waft some fragrance from a rifled rose
Through yonder gulf of night and nothingness.

Hadst thou in battle fallen, were my soul
Bereft of Palmerin? Or had I languished,
Would Florida have mocked thy constancy?

Banish such thoughts, dear master of my being,
From thy immortal soul. These fond enchantments

Make the sweet holiday and youth of love ;
They are a largess and bright boon of heaven
To sweeten our resolves. But youth will fade,
And death, not mowing with a two-edged scythe,
Will cut down one and leave the other bowing
Before the wintry wind. Arm not with terror
That swift, unheralded, insidious foe,
But let him find our love invulnerable
And our heart's treasure in eternal hands.
My lord, good-night. To-day my joy is full,
To God I leave to-morrow. Fare thee well.

PALMERIN [*kneeling to kiss the hand she gives him*].
Good-night, my own. May angels guard thy
slumber —

FLERIDA. And share thy vigil —

PALMERIN. Till my angel come.

[*Exit FLERIDA, followed by her household.*

*As they go, some voices repeat snatches
of the previous song: " Come make thy
dwelling here," etc.*

PALMERIN [*alone*].

No, Palmerin, unbuckle not thy arms,

Guard well thy lady's sleep.

Haply the wizards of the wood have charms

To make a virgin weep.

All goblin sprites and fairies of the trees

That lead their impish dance

Will spy thy mantle's cross ; their blood will freeze

To see a Christian lance.

Hark ! the old croaking frogs, and the far din

Of crickets in the field.

They bid me welcome home. " Hie, Palmerin,

Once of the argent shield,

" What's this device ? Is Florida this flower,

And these five pearls her tears,

Shed for thy love in her disconsolate bower

These five unhappy years ?

“ Those sable bars athwart a field of gules,
Are they thy nights and days
Spent mid bluff captains and rash drunken fools
In marches, bouts, and frays? ”

Ay, ye chirp well, if I divine your note,
Ye civil, croaking elves !
A foolish master have your fields and moat
And your so learned selves.

Nothing he knows of wit or bookish lore
And nothing of the fair,
Only to break the brutal front of war
And half repeat a prayer.

Yet this sad wight is he, as fairies know,
Whom Flerida hath blest,
Soon locked within her arms. She long ago
Was locked within his breast,

Celestial Florida, whom all the hours
Adorning from her birth
Have crowned the queen of stars, the queen of flowers,
The queen of maids on earth.

Her peerless heart hath chosen him her lord,
The rare intrepid maid,
Whose tender hand incarnadined a sword
Lest he should be betrayed.

Out of his nothingness her bounteous love
Bred all his poor desert
As God lent to the void he made us of
His image for a heart.

Like to the dateless dark before our birth
Are those five winters past,
This vigil like the twilight life of earth,
Then paradise at last

And changeless love. How in the paling skies

The star of morning burns !

Open, heaven's gates ! Eternal sun, arise !

Sir Palmerin returns.



ELEGIAC AND LYRIC POEMS



PREMONITION

THE muffled syllables that Nature speaks
Fill us with deeper longing for her word ;
She hides a meaning that the spirit seeks,
She makes a sweeter music than is heard.

A hidden light illumines all our seeing,
An unknown love enchants our solitude.
We feel and know that from the depths of being
Exhales an infinite, a perfect good.

Though the heart wear the garment of its sorrow
And be not happy like a naked star,
Yet from the thought of peace some peace we borrow,
Some rapture from the rapture felt afar.

Our heart strings are too coarse for Nature's fingers
To wake her purest melodies upon,
And the harsh tremor that among them lingers
Will into sweeter silence die anon.

We catch the broken prelude and suggestion
Of things unuttered, needing to be sung ;
We know the burden of them, and their question
Lies heavy on the heart, nor finds a tongue.

Till haply, lightning through the storm of ages,
Our sullen secret flash from sky to sky,
Glowing in some diviner poet's pages
And swelling into rapture from this sigh.

SOLIPSISM

I COULD believe that I am here alone,
And all the world my dream ;
The passion of the scene is all my own,
And things that seem but seem.

Perchance an exhalation of my sorrow
Hath raised this vaporous show,
For whence but from my soul should all things
borrow
So deep a tinge of woe ?

I keep the secret doubt within my breast
To be the gods' defence,
To ease the heart by too much ruth oppressed
And drive the horror hence.

O sorrow that the patient brute should cower
And die, not having sinned !

O pity that the wild and fragile flower
Should shiver in the wind !

Then were I dreaming dreams I know not of,
For that is part of me
That feels the piercing pang of grief and love
And doubts eternally.

But whether all to me the vision come
Or break in many beams,
The pageant ever shifts, and being's sum
Is but the sum of dreams.

SYBARIS

LAP, ripple, lap, Icarian wave, the sand
Along the ruins of this piteous land ;
Murmur the praises of a lost delight,
And soothe the aching of my starvèd sight
With sheen of mirrored beauties, caught aright.

Here stood enchanted palaces of old,
All veined porphyry and burnished gold ;
Here matrons and slight maidens sat aloof
Beneath cool porches, rich with Tyrian woof
Hung from the carven rafters of the roof.

Here in the mart a swarthy turbaned brave
Showed the wrought blade or praised the naked slave.

“Touch with your finger-tips this edge of steel,”
Quoth he, “and see this lad, from head to heel
Like a bronze Cupid. Feel, my masters, feel.”

Here Aphrodite filled with frenzied love
The dark recesses of her murmurous grove.
The doves that haunted it, the winds that sighed,
Were souls of youths that in her coverts died,
And hopes of heroes strewed her garden wide.

Under her shades a narrow brazen gate
Led to the courts of Ares and of Fate.
Who entered breathed the unutterable prayer
Of cruel hearts, and death was worshipped there,
And men went thence enfranchised by despair.

Here the proud athlete in the baths delayed,
While a cool fountain on his shoulders played,
Then in fine linen swathed his breast and thighs,
And silent, myrtle-crowned, with serious eyes,
Stepped forth to list the wranglings of the wise.

A sage stalked by, his ragged mantle bound
About his brows ; his eyes perused the ground ;
He conned the number of the cube and square
Of the moon's orb ; his horny feet and bare
Trampled the lilies carpeting the stair.

A jasper terrace hung above the sea
Where the King supped with his beloved three :
The Libyan chanted of her native land
In raucous melody, the Indian fanned,
And the huge mastiff licked his master's hand.

Below, alone, despairing of the gale,
A crouching sailor furled the saffron sail ;
Then rose, breathed deep, and plunged in the lagoon.
A mermaid spied his glistening limbs : her croon
Enticed him down ; her cold arms choked him soon.

And the King laughed, filled full his jewelled bowl,
And drinking cried : " What know we of the soul ?

What number addeth to her harmony
These drops of vintage that attune her key,
Or those of brine that set the wretched free?

“If death should change me, as old fables feign,
Into some slave or beast, to purge with pain
My lordly pleasures, let my torment be
Still to behold thee, Sybaris, and see
The sacred horror of thy loves and thee.

“Be thou my hell, my dumb eternal grief,
But spare thy King the madness of belief,
The brutish faith of ignorant desire
That strives and wanders. Let the visible fire
Of beauty torture me. That doom is higher.

“I wear the crown of life. The rose and gem
Twine with the pale gold of my diadem.
Nature, long secret, hath unveiled to me
And proved her vile. Her wanton bosoms be
My pillow now. I know her, I am free.”

He spoke, and smiling stretched a languid hand,
And music burst in mighty chords and bland
Of harp and flute and cymbal. — When between
Two cypresses the large moon rose, her sheen
Silvered the nymphs' feet, tripping o'er the green.

♦

AVILA

AGAIN my feet are on the fragrant moor
Amid the purple uplands of Castile,
Realm proudly desolate and nobly poor,
Scorched by the sky's inexorable zeal.

Wide desert where a diadem of towers
Above Adajar hems a silent town,
And locks, unmindful of the mocking hours,
Her twenty temples in a granite crown.

The shafts of fervid light are in the sky,
And in my heart the mysteries of yore.
Here the sad trophies of my spirit lie :
These dead fulfilled my destiny before.

Like huge primeval stones that strew this plain,
 Their nameless sorrows sink upon my breast,
And like this ardent sky their cancelled pain
 Smiles at my grief and quiets my unrest.

For here hath mortal life from age to age
 Endured the silent hand that makes and mars,
And, sighing, taken up its heritage
 Beneath the smiling and inhuman stars.

Still o'er this town the crested castle stands,
 A nest for storks, as once for haughty souls ;
Still from the abbey, where the vale expands,
 The curfew for the long departed tolls,

Wafting some ghostly blessing to the heart
 From prayer of nun or silent Capuchin,
To heal with balm of Golgotha the smart
 Of weary labour and distracted sin.

What fate has cast me on a tide of time
 Careless of joy and covetous of gold,
What force compelled to weave the pensive rhyme
 When loves are mean, and faith and honour old,

When riches crown in vain men's sordid lives,
 And learning chokes a mind of base degree?
What wingèd spirit rises from their hives?
 What heart, revolting, ventures to be free?

Their pride will sink and more ignobly fade
 Without memorial of its hectic fire.
What altars shall survive them, where they prayed?
 What lovely deities? What riven lyre?

Tarry not, pilgrim, but with inward gaze
 Pass daily, musing, where their prisons are,
And o'er the ocean of their babble raise
 Thy voice in greeting to thy changeless star.

Abroad a tumult, and a ruin here ;
Nor world nor desert hath a home for thee.
Out of the sorrows of the barren year
Build thou thy dwelling in eternity.

Let patience, faith's wise sister, be thy heaven,
And with high thoughts necessity alloy.
Love is enough, and love is ever given,
While fleeting days bring gift of fleeting joy.

The little pleasures that to catch the sun
Bubble a moment up from being's deep,
The glittering sands of passion as they run,
The merry laughter and the happy sleep,—

These are the gems that, like the stars on fire,
Encrust with glory all our heaven's zones ;
Each shining atom, in itself entire,
Brightens the galaxy of sister stones,

Dust of a world that crumbled when God's dream
 To throbbing pulses broke the life of things,
And mingled with the void the scattered gleam
 Of many orbs that move in many rings,

Perchance at last into the parent sun
 To fall again and reunite their rays,
When God awakes and gathers into one
 The light of all his loves and all his days.

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL

THE buttress frowns, the gorgeous windows blaze,
The vault hangs wonderful with woven fans,
The four stone sentinels to heaven raise
Their heads, in a more constant faith than man's.

The College gathers, and the courtly prayer
Is answered still by hymn and organ-groan ;
The beauty and the mystery are there,
The Virgin and Saint Nicholas are gone.

Not one *Ora pro nobis* bids them pause
In their far flight, to hear this anthem roll ;
No heart, of all that the King's relic awes,
Sings *Requiescat* to his mournful soul.

No grain of incense thrown upon the embers
Of their cold hearth, no lamp in witness hung
Before their image. One alone remembers ;
Only the stranger knows their mother tongue.

Long rows of tapers light the people's places ;
The little choristers may read, and mark
The rhythmic fall ; I see their wondering faces ;
Only the altar — like the soul — is dark.

Ye floating voices through these arches ringing
With measured music, subtle, sweet, and strong,
Feel ye the inmost reason of your singing?
Know ye the ancient burden of your song?

The twilight deepens, and the blood-dyed glories
Of all these fiery blazonings are dim.
Oh, they are jumbled, sad, forgotten stories !
Why should ye read them, children? Chant your
hymn.

But I must con them while the rays of even
Kindle aloft some fading jewel-gleam
And the vast windows glow a peopled heaven,
Rich with the gathering pageant of my dream.

Eden I see, where from the leafy cover .
The green-eyed snake begins to uncoil his length
And whispers to the woman and her lover,
As they lie musing, large, in peaceful strength.

I see their children, bent with toil and terror,
Lurking in caves, or heaping madly on
The stones of Babel, or the endless error
Of Sodom, Nineveh, and Babylon.

Here the Egyptian, wedding life with death,
Flies from the sun into his painted tomb,
And winds the secret of his antique faith
Tight in his shroud, and seals in sterile gloom.

There the bold prophets of the heart's desire
Hail the new Zion God shall build for them,
And rapt Isaiah strikes the heavenly lyre,
And Jeremiah mourns Jerusalem.

Here David's daughter, full of grace and truth,
Kneels in the temple, waiting for the Lord ;
With the first *Ave* comes the wingèd youth,
Bringing the lily ere he bring the sword.

There, to behold the Mother and the Child,
The sturdy shepherds down the mountain plod,
And angels sing, with voices sweet and wild
And wide lips parted : " Glory be to God."

Here, mounted on an ass, the twain depart
To hallowed Egypt, safe from Herod's wrong ;
And Mary ponders all things in her heart,
And pensive Joseph sadly walks along.

There with the Twelve, before his blood is shed,
Christ blesses bread and breaks it with his hands,
"This is my body." Thomas shakes his head,
They marvel all, and no one understands,

Save John, whom Jesus loved above the rest.
He marvels too, but, seeking naught beside,
Leans, as his wont is, on his Master's breast.
Ah ! the Lord's body also should abide.

There Golgotha is dark against the blue
In the broad east, above the painted crowd,
And many look upon the sign, but few
Read the hard lesson of the cross aloud.

And from this altar, now an empty tomb,
The Lord is risen. Lo ! he is not here.
No shining angel sitteth in the gloom,
No Magdalen in anguish draweth near.

All pure in heart, or all in aspect pure,
The seemly Christians, kneeling, line the choir,
And drop their eyelids, tender and demure,
As the low lingering harmonies expire.

In that *Amen* are the last echoes blended
Of all the ghostly world. The shades depart
Into the sacred night. In peace is ended
The long delirious fever of the heart.

Then I go forth into the open wold
And breathe the vigour of the freshening wind,
And with the piling drift of cloud I hold
A worship sweeter to the homeless mind,

Where the squat willows with their osiers crowned
Border the humble reaches of the Cam,
And the deep meadows stretching far around
Make me forget the exile that I am, —

Exile not only from the wind-swept moor
Where Guadarrama lifts his purple crest,
But from the spirit's realm, celestial, sure
Goal of all hope and vision of the best.

They also will go forth, these gentle youths,
Strong in the virtues of their manful isle,
Till one the pathway of the forest smooths,
And one the Ganges rules, and one the Nile ;

And to whatever wilderness they choose
Their hearts will bear the sanctities of home,
The perfect ardours of the Grecian Muse,
The mighty labour of the arms of Rome ;

But, ah ! how little of these storied walls
Beneath whose shadow all their nurture was !
No, not one passing memory recalls
The Blessed Mary and Saint Nicholas.

Unhappy King, look not upon these towers,
Remember not thine only work that grew.
The moving world that feeds thy gift devours,
And the same hand that finished overthrew.

ON AN UNFINISHED STATUE

BY MICHAEL ANGELO IN THE BARGELLO,
CALLED AN APOLLO OR A DAVID

WHAT beauteous form beneath a marble veil
 Awaited in this block the Master's hand?
Could not the magic of his art avail
 To unseal that beauty's tomb and bid it stand?

Alas! the torpid and unwilling mass
 Misknew the sweetness of the mind's control,
And the quick shifting of the winds, alas!
 Denied a body to that flickering soul.

Fair homeless spirit, harbinger of bliss,
 It wooed dead matter that they both might live,
But dreamful earth still slumbered through the kiss
 And missed the blessing heaven stooped to give,

As when Endymion, locked in dullard sleep,
 Endured the gaze of Dian, till she turned
Stung with immortal wrath and doomed to weep
 Her maiden passion ignorantly spurned.

How should the vision stay to guide the hand,
 How should the holy thought and ardour stay,
When the false deeps of all the soul are sand
 And the loose rivets of the spirit clay?

What chisel shaking in the pulse of lust
 Shall find the perfect line, immortal, pure?
What fancy blown by every random gust
 Shall mount the breathless heavens and endure?

Vain was the trance through which a thrill of joy
 Passed for the nonce, when a vague hand, unled,
Half shaped the image of this lovely boy
 And caught the angel's garment as he fled.

Leave, leave, distracted hand, the baffling stone,
And on that clay, thy fickle heart, begin.
Mould first some steadfast virtue of thine own
Out of the sodden substance of thy sin.

They who wrought wonders by the Nile of old,
Bequeathing their immortal part to us,
Cast their own spirit first into the mould
And were themselves the rock they fashioned thus.

Ever their docile and unwearied eye
Traced the same ancient pageant to the grave,
And awe made rich their spirit's husbandry
With the perpetual reflue of its wave,

Till 'twixt the desert and the constant Nile
Sphinx, pyramid, and awful temple grew,
And the vast gods, self-knowing, learned to smile
Beneath the sky's unalterable blue.

Long, long ere first the rapt Arcadian swain

 Heard Pan's wild music pulsing through the grove,
His people's shepherds held paternal reign
 Beneath the large benignity of Jove.

Long mused the Delphic sibyl in her cave

 Ere mid his laurels she beheld the god,
And Beauty rose a virgin from the wave
 In lands the foot of Heracles had trod.

Athena reared her consecrated wall,

 Poseidon laid its rocky basement sure,
When Theseus had the monstrous race in thrall
 And made the worship of his people pure.

Long had the stripling stood in silence, veiled,

 Hearing the heroes' legend o'er and o'er,
Long in the keen palæstra striven, nor quailed
 To tame the body to the task it bore,

Ere soul and body, shaped by patient art,
Walked linkèd with the gods, like friend with friend,
And reason, mirrored in the sage's heart,
Beheld her purpose and confessed her end.

Mould, then, thyself and let the marble be.
Look not to frailty for immortal themes,
Nor mock the travail of mortality
With barren husks and harvesting of dreams.

MIDNIGHT

THE dank earth reeks with three days' rain,
The phantom trees are dark and still,
Above the darkness and the hill
The tardy moon shines out again.
O heavy lethargy of pain !
O shadows of forgotten ill !

My parrot lips, when I was young,
To prove and to disprove were bold.
The mighty world has tied my tongue,
And in dull custom growing old
I leave the burning truth untold
And the heart's anguish all unsung.

Youth dies in man's benumbèd soul,
Maid bows to woman's broken life,
A thousand leagues of silence roll
Between the husband and the wife.
The spirit faints with inward strife
And lonely gazing at the pole.

But how should reptiles pine for wings
Or a parched desert know its dearth?
Immortal is the soul that sings
The sorrow of her mortal birth.
O cruel beauty of the earth!
O love's unutterable stings!

IN GRANTCHESTER MEADOWS

ON FIRST HEARING A SKYLARK SING

Too late, thou tender songster of the sky
Trilling unseen, by things unseen inspired,

I list thy far-heard cry
That poets oft to kindred song hath fired,
As floating through the purple veils of air
Thy soul is poured on high,
A little joy in an immense despair.

Too late thou biddest me escape the earth,
In ignorance of wrong
To spin a little slender thread of song ;
On yet unwearied wing
To rise and soar and sing,
Not knowing death or birth
Or any true unhappy human thing.

To dwell 'twixt field and cloud,
By river-willow and the murmurous sedge,
Be thy sweet privilege,
To thee and to thy happy lords allowed.
My native valley higher mountains hedge
'Neath starlit skies and proud,
And sadder music in my soul is loud.

Yet have I loved thy voice,
Frail echo of some ancient sacred joy.

Ah, who might not rejoice
Here to have wandered, a fair English boy,
And breathed with life thy rapture and thy rest
Where woven meadow-grasses fold thy nest?

But whose life is his choice?
And he who chooseth not hath chosen best.

FUTILITY

FAIR Nature, has thy wisdom naught to say
To cheer thy child in a disconsolate hour?
Why do thy subtle hands betray their power
And but half-fashioned leave thy finer clay?
Upon what journeys doth thy fancy stray
That weeds in thy broad garden choke the flower,
And many a pilgrim harboured in thy bower
A stranger came, a stranger went away?
Ah, Mother, little can the soul avail
Unchristened at some font of ancient love.
What boots the vision if the meaning fail,
When all the marvels of the skies above
March to the passions they are mirrors of?
If the heart pine, the very stars will pale.

BEFORE A STATUE OF ACHILLES

I

BEHOLD Pelides with his yellow hair,
Proud child of Thetis, hero loved of Jove ;
Above the frowning of his brows it wove
A crown of gold, well combed, with Spartan care.
Who might have seen him, sullen, great, and fair,
As with the wrongful world he proudly strove,
And by high deeds his wilder passion shrove,
Mastering love, resentment, and despair.
He knew his end, and Phœbus' arrow sure
He braved for fame immortal and a friend,
Despising life ; and we, who know our end,
Know that in our decay he shall endure
And all our children's hearts to grief inure,
With whose first bitter battles his shall blend.

II

Who brought thee forth, immortal vision, who
In Phthia or in Tempe brought thee forth?
Out of the sunlight and the sapful earth
What god the simples of thy spirit drew?
A goddess rose from the green waves, and threw
Her arms about a king, to give thee birth;
A centaur, patron of thy boyish mirth,
Over the meadows in thy footsteps flew.
Now Thessaly forgets thee, and the deep
Thy keeled bark furrowed answers not thy prayer;
But far away new generations keep
Thy laurels fresh, where branching Isis hems
The lawns of Oxford round about, or where
Enchanted Eton sits by pleasant Thames.

III

I gaze on thee as Phidias of old
Or Polyclitus gazed, when first he saw
These hard and shining limbs, without a flaw,
And cast his wonder in heroic mould.
Unhappy me who only may behold,
Nor make immutable and fix in awe
A fair immortal form no worm shall gnaw,
A tempered mind whose faith was never told !
The godlike mien, the lion's lock and eye,
The well-knit sinew, utter a brave heart
Better than many words that part by part
Spell in strange symbols what serene and whole
In nature lives, nor can in marble die.
The perfect body is itself the soul.

ODI ET AMO

*I love and hate. Alas, the why
I know not: but I love, and die.*

CATULLUS.

I

A WREATHÈD altar was this pagan heart,
In sad denial dressed and high intent,
And amid ruins fed its flame apart,
Heedless of shadows as they came and went.
Till the poor soul, enticed by what she saw,
Forsook her grief's eternal element,
Filled with her tears a well from which to draw,
And flooded heaven with a light she lent.
A thousand times that mirrored glory fled,
By ravished eyes a thousand times pursued ;
Yet loving hope outlived all beauties dead,

And hunger turned the very stones to food.
Insensate love, wilt thou then never tire,
Breeding the fuel of thy proper fire?

II

What gleaming cross rebukes this infidel?
What lion groans, awakened in his lair?
Angel or demon, what unearthly spell
Returns, divinely false like all things fair,
To mock this desolation? Fleeting vision,
Frail as a smoke-wreath in the sunlit air,
Indomitable hope or vain derision,
Madness or revelation, sin or prayer,
What art thou? Is man's sum of wisdom this,
That he believe denying, and blaspheme
Worshipping still, and drink eternal bliss
Out of the maddening chalice of a dream?
Strange sweetness that embitterest content,
Art thou a poison or a sacrament?

CATHEDRALS BY THE SEA

REPLY TO A SONNET BEGINNING "CATHE-
DRALS ARE NOT BUILT ALONG THE SEA"

For æons had the self-responsive tide
Risen to ebb, and tempests blown to clear,
And the belated moon refilled her sphere
To wane anew — for, æons since, she died —
When to the deeps that called her earth replied
(Lest year should cancel unavailing year)
And took from her dead heart the stones to rear
A cross-shaped temple to the Crucified.
Then the wild winds through organ-pipes descended
To utter what they meant eternally,
And not in vain the moon devoutly mended
Her wasted taper, lighting Calvary,
While with a psalmody of angels blended
The sullen diapason of the sea.

MONT BRÉVENT

O DWELLER in the valley, lift thine eyes
To where, above the drift of cloud, the stone
Endures in silence, and to God alone
Upturns its furrowed visage, and is wise.
There yet is being, far from all that dies,
And beauty where no mortal maketh moan,
Where larger planets swim the liquid zone,
And wider spaces stretch to calmer skies.
Only a little way above the plain
Is snow eternal. Round the mountain's knees
Hovers the fury of the wind and rain.
Look up, and teach thy noble heart to cease
From endless labour. There is perfect peace
Only a little way above thy pain.

THE RUSTIC AT THE PLAY

OUR youth is like a rustic at the play
That cries aloud in simple-hearted fear,
Curses the villain, shudders at the fray,
And weeps before the maiden's wreathèd bier.
Yet once familiar with the changeful show,
He starts no longer at a brandished knife,
But, his heart chastened at the sight of woe,
Ponders the mirrored sorrows of his life.
So tutored too, I watch the moving art
Of all this magic and impassioned pain
That tells the story of the human heart
In a false instance, such as poets feign ;
I smile, and keep within the parchment furled
That prompts the passions of this strutting world.

RESURRECTION

THE SOUL OF A BURIED BODY

METHOUGHT that I was dead,
Felt my large heart, a tomb within the tomb,
Cold, hope-untenanted,
Not thankless for this gloom.
For all I loved on earth had fled before me.
I was the last to die.
I heard what my soul hated tramping o'er me,
And knew that trouble stalked beneath the sky.
But now is loosed the mailed hand of Death
Clapped on my mouth. I seem to draw a breath
And something like a sigh.

I feel the blood again
Coursing within my body's quickened house,
 Feel hands and throat and brain,
 And dim thoughts growing plain,
Or dreams of thoughts. So spring might thaw the
 boughs
And from its winter's lethargy arouse
An oak's numb spirit. — But hark ! I seem to hear
 A sound, like distant thunder.
Above the quaking earth it breaks, or under,
 And cracks the riven sphere.
This vault is widened, I may lift my head,
Behold a ray ! The sun ! — I was not dead.

THE ANGEL OF ETERNITY

Yes, dead. Be not affrighted.
Ages have passed. This world is not the same.
 Thy lamp of life, relighted,
 Burns with a purer flame.

THE SOUL

What lovely form art thou?
What spirit, voice, or face
Known and unknown? I cannot name thee now
Nor the long-vanished place
Where first I pledged thee some forgotten vow.
Dear mother or sweet son
Or young love dead or lost familiar friend,
Which of these all art thou, or all, or none,
Bright stranger, that dost bend
Thy glorious golden head,
A kindlier sun, above the wakened dead?

THE ANGEL

We are not strangers. 'T is the world was strange,
That rude antique parade of earth and sky,
That foolish pageant of mortality
And weary round of change.
Till this glad moment thou hast lived in dreams,

Nursed in a fable, catechised to croon
The empty science of a sun and moon
 That with their dubious beams
Light the huge dusky stage of all that seems.
Believe it not, my own. Awake, depart
 Out of the shades of hell,
 Trusting the sacred spell
That falls upon thy strong perplexèd heart,
 The joy ineffable,
The nameless premonition and dire pang
 Of love. Be free at last,
Free as the hopes that from thy sorrow sprang.
Forget the horror of the tyrant past,
 Forget the gods, forget
The baleful shadow on the present cast
 By all that is not yet.
Arise and follow me. Say not I seem
 A shadow among shades,
A dryad's laugh amid the windy glades,
A swimmer's body guessed beneath the stream.

This is the dawn of day,
Thy dream-oppressèd vision breaking through
Its icy hood of clay
And plunging deep into the balmy blue.
Bid thy vain cares adieu
And say farewell to earth, thy foster-mother.
She hath befooled thee long,
And fondly thought to smother
The sweet and cruel laughter of my song
Which the stars sing together, and the throng
Of seraphs ever shout to one another.
Come, heaven-chosen brother,
Dear kinsman, come along.

THE SOUL

To what fields beside what rivers
Dost thou beckon me, fair love?
With no sprinkled stars above
Is high heaven seen? Or quivers,

With no changes of the moon,
Her bright path athwart the pool?
Is thy strange world beautiful?
Tell me true, before I shake
From my sense this heavy swoon.
Tell me true, lest I awake
Into deeper dreams, poor fool,
And rejoice for nothing's sake.

THE ANGEL

For mortals life and truth
Are things apart, nor when the first is done
Know they the other ; for their lusty youth
Is madness, and their age oblivion.

But henceforth thou art one
With the supernal mind,
Not born in labour nor in death resigned,
The life of all that live,
The light by whose eclipse the world is blind,

The truth of all that know,
The joy for which we grieve,
And the untasted sweet that makes our woe.
Now thou hast drained the wine
Shatter the glass.
The music was divine,
Let the voice pass.
Linger not in the host
Of the long lost
Bidding the dying bring
Meal-cakes and fruit, and sing
To cheer thy ghost.
But be the living joy
That tunes all song,
The loves of girl and boy,
The hopes that throng
The unconquerable heart, defying wrong.
Seek for thine immortality of bliss
Not other brighter skies
Or later worlds than this,

But all that in this struggle is the prize,
The love that wings the kiss,
The truth the visions miss.

THE SOUL

My heaven lives, bright angel, in thine eyes.
As when, beside the Lake of Galilee,
John, o'er his meshes bent,
Looked up, and saw another firmament
When God said, Follow me ;
So is my world transfigured, seeing thee,
And, looking in thine eyes, I am content,
And with thy sweet voice for all argument
I leave my tangled nets beside the sea.
Done is my feignèd task,
Fallen the mask
That made me other, O my soul, than thee.
I have fulfilled my pain
And borne my cross,
And my great gain

Is to have known my loss.
Keep, blessed vision, keep
The sacred beauty that entranced my soul.
I have read ; seal the scroll.
I have lived ; let me sleep.

THE ANGEL

Behold, I close thine eyes
With the first touch of my benignant hands.
With consecrated brands
I light thy pyre and loose thy spirit's bands.
The eternal gods receive thy sacrifice,
The changeless bless thy embers.
May there arise from thence no wailing ghost
That shivers and remembers
The haunts he loved, where he hath suffered most.
The life that lived by change
Is dead, nor changeth more.
No eager, dull, oblivious senses pore
On portents dark and strange.

Thy first life was not life,
Nor was thy first death death.
Thy children took thy heritage of strife,
And thy transmutable breath
Passed to another heart that travaileth.
Now thou hast truly died ;
Escaped, renounced, defied
The insensate fervour and the fret of being ;
And thy own master, freed
From shame of murderous need,
Pure, just, all-seeing,
Now thou shalt live indeed.

THE SOUL

I pay the price of birth,
My earth returns to earth.
Hurry my ashes, thou avenging wind,
Into the vortex of the whirling spheres !
I die, for I have sinned,
Yea, I have loved, and drained my heart of tears.

And thou within whose womb,
Mother of nations, labouring Universe,
My life grew, be its tomb.
Thou brought'st me forth, take now my vital seed.
Receive thy wage, thou iron-hearted nurse,
Thy blessing I requite thee and thy curse.
Now shall my ashes breed
Within thy flesh for every thought a thought,
For every deed a deed,
For every pang I bore
An everlasting need,
For every wrong a wrong, and endless war.
All earthly hopes resigned
And all thy battle's spoils
I lay upon thine altar and restore ;
But the inviolate mind
Is loosened from thy toils
By thy own fatal fires. I mount, I soar,
Glad Phoenix, from the flame
Into the placid heaven whence I came,

Floating upon the smoke's slow lurid wings
 Into my native sky
To bear report of all this vanity
 And sad offence of things,
 Where with knowledge I may lie,
Veiled in the shadow of eternal wings.

THE ANGEL

If in the secret sessions of our love
 Above the heavenly spheres,
Some stain upon the page of wisdom prove
 Her earthly price of tears,
Cling closer, my beloved, that the beat
 Of my unruffled heart
May tune thy own, its tenderer counterpart,
To noble courage, and from this high seat
 Of our divine repose
Large consolation flow to mortal woes.
 For 'neath the sun's fierce heat,
In midst of madness and inscrutable throes,

His heart is strong who knows
That o'er the mountains come the silent feet
Of Patience, leading Peace,
And his complainings cease
To see the starlight shining on the snows.



TRANSLATIONS



FROM MICHAEL ANGELO

I

" Non so se s'è la desiata luce "

I KNOW not if from uncreated spheres
Some longed-for ray it be that warms my breast,
Or lesser light, in memory expressed,
Of some once lovely face, that reappears,
Or passing rumour ringing in my ears,
Or dreamy vision, once my bosom's guest,
That left behind I know not what unrest,
Haply the reason of these wayward tears.
But what I feel and seek, what leads me on,
Comes not of me ; nor can I tell aright
Where shines the hidden star that sheds this light.
Since I beheld thee, sweet and bitter fight
Within me. Resolution have I none.
Can this be, Master, what thine eyes have done ?

II

"Il mio refugio"

THE haven and last refuge of my pain
(A strong and safe defence)
Are tears and supplications, but in vain.
Love sets upon me banded with Disdain,
One armed with pity and one armed with death,
And as death smites me, pity lends me breath.
Else had my soul long since departed thence.
She pineth to remove
Whither her hopes of endless peace abide
And beauty dwelleth without beauty's pride,
There her last bliss to prove.
But still the living fountain of my tears
Wells in the heart when all thy truth appears,
Lest death should vanquish love.

III

"Gli occhi miei vaghi delle cose belle"

RAVISHED by all that to the eyes is fair,
Yet hungry for the joys that truly bless,
My soul can find no stair
To mount to heaven, save earth's loveliness.
For from the stars above
Descends a glorious light
That lifts our longing to their highest height
And bears the name of love.
Nor is there aught can move
A gentle heart, or purge or make it wise,
But beauty and the starlight of her eyes.

FROM ALFRED DE MUSSET

SOUVENIR

I WEEP, but with no bitterness I weep,
To look again upon thee, hallowed spot,
O dearest grave, and most of men forgot,
Where buried love doth sleep.

What witchcraft think you that this desert hath,
Dear friends, who take my hand and bid me stay,
Now that the gentle wont of many a day
Would lead me down this path?

Here are the wooded slopes, the flowering heath,
The silver footprints on the silent sand,
The loitering lanes, alive with lovers' breath,
Where first I kissed her hand.

I know these fir-trees, and this mossy stone,
And this deep gorge, and all its winding ways ;
These friendly giants, whose primeval moan
Hath rocked my happy days.

My footsteps' echo in this tangled tree
Gives back youth's music, like a singing bird ;
Dear haunts, fair wilderness her presence stirred,
Did you not watch for me ?

I will not dry these tear-drops : let them flow,
And soothe a bitterness that yet might last,
And o'er my waking-weary eyelids throw
The shadow of the past.

My useless plainings shall not make to cease
The happy echoes of the vows we vowed :
Proud is this forest in its noble peace,
And my heart too is proud.

Give o'er to hopeless grief the bitter hours
You kneel to pray upon a brother's tomb :
Here blows the breath of love, and graveyard flowers
Not in this garden bloom.

See ! The moon rides athwart a bank of cloud.
Thy veils, fair Queen of Night, still cling to thee,
But soon thou loosenest thy virgin shroud
And smilest to be free.

As the rich earth, still dank with April rain,
Beneath thy rays exhales day's captive balm,
So from my purgèd soul, as pure, as calm,
The old love breathes again.

Where are they gone, those ghosts of sorrow pale,
Where fled the passion that my heart defiled ?
Once in the bosom of this friendly vale
I am again a child.

O might of time, O changes of the year,
Ye undo sorrow and the tears we shed,
But, touched with pity, on our blossoms sere
Your light feet never tread.

Heavenly solace, be for ever blest !
I had not thought a sword could pierce so far
Into the heart, and leave upon the breast
So sweet and dear a scar.

Far from me the sharp word, the thankless mind,
Of vulgar sorrow customary weed,
Shroud that about the corse of love they wind
Who never loved indeed.

Why, Dante, dost thou say the saddest curse
Is joy remembered in unhappy days?
What grief compelled thee to this bitter verse
In sorrow's harsh dispraise?

O'er all the worlds is light bereft of gladness
When sad eclipses cast their blight on us?
Did thy great soul, in its immortal sadness,
Speak to thee, Dante, thus?

No, by this sacred light upon me cast !
Not in thy heart this blasphemy had birth.
It is the truest happiness on earth
To have a happy past.

What ! When the soul forlorn finds yet a spark
Mid the hot ashes of her stifled sighs,
And doth that flame, her only treasure, mark
With captivated eyes,

Bathing her wounds in the delicious past
That mirrors brokenly her loves again,
Thy cruel word her feeble joy would blast
And turn to bitter pain?

And couldst thou wrong thine own Francesca so,
Wrong thy bright angel with a word like this,
Her whose lips, parting to rehearse her woe,
 Broke an eternal kiss?

What, righteous Heaven, is our human thought,
And to the love of truth who yet will cling,
If every pain or joy e'er shunned or sought
 Turns to a doubtful thing?

How can you live, strange souls that nothing awes?
In midst of haste and passion, song and mirth,
Nor all the stars of heaven give you pause,
 Nor all the sins of earth ;

But when upon your fated way you meet
Some dumb memorial of a passion dead,
That little pebble stops you, and you dread
 To bruise your tender feet.

You cry aloud that life is but a dream,
And, to the truth awaking, wring your hands,
And grieve your bubble but a moment stands
 Upon time's foaming stream.

Poor fools ! That moment when your soul could shake
The numbing fetters off that it enthrall,
That fleeting moment was your all in all —
 Oh, mourn not for its sake !

But rather mourn your weight of earthly dross,
Your joyless toil, your stains of blood and mire,
Your sunless days, your nights without desire ;
 In these was utter loss.

What profit have you of your late lament,
And what from heaven do your murmurs crave,
The plaints you sow upon the barren grave
 Of every pleasure spent ?

Life is a dream, and all things pass, I know :
If some fair splendour we be charmed withal,
We pluck the flower, and at the breath we blow
 Its withered petals fall.

Ay, the first kiss and the first virgin vow
That ever mortals upon earth did swear,
That whirlwind caught which strips the frozen bough
 And stones to sand doth wear.

A witness to the lovers' troth was night,
With changeful skies, o'ercast with mystery,
And stars unnumbered, that an inward light
 Devours unceasingly.

They saw death hush the song bird in the glade,
Blast the pale flower, and freeze the torpid worm,
And choke the fountain where the image played
 Of their forgotten form.

Yet they joined hands above the mouldering clod,
Blind with love's light that flashed across the sky,
Nor felt the cold eye of the changeless God
Who watches all things die.

Fools ! says the sage : thrice blest ! the poet says.
What wretched joy is to the faint heart dear
Whom noise of torrents fills with weak amaze
And the wind fills with fear ?

I have seen beneath the sun more beauties fail
Than white sea foam or leaves of forest sere ;
More than the swallows and the roses frail
Desert the widowed year.

Mine eyes have gazed on sights of deeper woe
Than Juliet dead within the gorgèd tomb,
And deadlier than the cup that Romeo
Drank to his love and doom.

I have seen my love, when all I loved had perished,
Who to a whited sepulchre is turned ;
Seen the thin dust of all I ever cherished
 In her cold heart inurned,—

Dust of that faith which, in our bosoms furled,
The gentle night had warded well from doubt.
More than a single life, alas ! a world
 Was that day blotted out.

Still young I found her, and, men said, more fair ;
In heaven's light her eyes could still rejoice,
And her lips opened, and a smile was there,
 And sound as of a voice.

But not that gentle voice, that tender grace,
Those eyes I worshipped when they looked their
 prayer :
My heart, still full of her, searched, searched her face
 And could not find her there.

And still I could have gone to her, and cast
My arms about that chill and lifeless stone,
And cried, Where hast thou left it, faithless one,
Where hast thou left the past?

But no : it rather seemed as if by chance
Some unknown woman had that voice and eye ;
I looked up into heaven ; with cold glance
I passed that statue by.

Not without pangs of shame and bitterness
I watched her smiling shadow glide away ;
But what of that ? Immortal nature, say,
Have I loved therefore less ?

On me the gods may now their lightnings fling,
They cannot undo truth, nor kill the past.
Like a wrecked sailor to a broken mast
To my dead love I cling.

I make no question of what flowers may bloom,
What virtue from the seasons man may borrow,
What heavenly lamp may flood with light to-morrow
The vault of this great tomb.

I only say: Here at this hour, one day,
I loved, and I was loved, and she was fair.
This treasure which no death can filch away
My soul to God shall bear.

FROM THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

ART

ALL things are doubly fair
If patience fashion them
And care —
Verse, enamel, marble, gem.

No idle chains endure :
Yet, Muse, to walk aright,
Lace tight
Thy buskin proud and sure.

Fie on a facile measure,
A shoe where every lout
At pleasure
Slips his foot in and out !

Sculptor, lay by the clay
On which thy nerveless finger
 May linger,
Thy thoughts flown far away.

Keep to Carrara rare,
Struggle with Paros cold,
 That hold
The subtle line and fair.

Lest haply nature lose
That proud, that perfect line,
 Make thine
The bronze of Syracuse.

And with a tender dread
Upon an agate's face
 Retrace
Apollo's golden head.

Despise a watery hue
And tints that soon expire.

With fire
Burn thine enamel true.

Twine, twine in artful wise
The blue-green mermaid's arms,
Mid charms
Of thousand heraldries.

Show in their triple lobe
Virgin and Child, that hold
Their globe,
Cross-crowned and aureoled.

— All things return to dust
Save beauties fashioned well.
The bust
Outlasts the citadel.

Oft doth the ploughman's heel,
Breaking an ancient clod,
Reveal
A Cæsar or a god.

The gods, too, die, alas !
But deathless and more strong
Than brass
Remains the sovereign song.

Chisel and carve and file,
Till thy vague dream imprint
Its smile
On the unyielding flint.

CONVIVIAL AND OCCASIONAL
VERSES

PROSIT NEUJAHR

BE the new year sweet and short
As the days of girl and boy are,
Full of friendship, full of sport —
Prosit Neujahr !

Be it beautiful and great
As the days of grief and joy are,
Full of wonder and of fate —
Prosit Neujahr !

FAIR HARVARD

FAIR Harvard, the winter of Puritan snows
That enshrouded thy tremulous birth
Melts slowly to spring, now the south wind blows
O'er the face of this generous earth.

Thy elms are outspreading their flexible arms
Over meadows more fruitful and broad,
And soft ivy is veiling with negligent charms
The gaunt walls of the castle of God.

With freedom for heritage, reason for star,
And friendship for sojourner here,
Shall music long tremblingly sound from afar
Or genius be smothered in fear?

Where the ages may meet and the spirit may climb
To a truth that is builded on doubt,
The eternal may dwell mid the currents of time
And peace above barbarous rout,

And the just voice unlearn to be strident and sharp,
And, attuned to life's happier choir,
Join the stress of all David might shout to his harp
With all Lysis might lisp to his lyre,

And Olympia again call the strong and the fleet
To glory and art and control,
And a deathless Academy build a retreat
To ponder the things of the soul.

If to glory, young Mother, thy destiny tend,
If thy labours have honour in store,
Our loves shall not die, though their chronicle end
Nor mortals remember us more.

For once from their dreaming the man and the boy,

Fair Harvard, awoke at thy name,

And our happiest years were a part of thy joy,

And our light was a spark of thy flame.

COLLEGE DRINKING SONG

As we say good-bye at the parting ways,
Let us sing together a song of praise,
Let us drink a toast to our college days,
To the walks through a world made for you and me,
To the boisterous farce and the echoing glee,
To the wonderful A and the dreadful E,

Drink, boys, drink !

To the games we won and the games we lost,
For we could n't tell which before we tossed,
And who cares now who paid the cost ?
To the woman's love that came and went,
To the good wine drunk and the money spent,
To the night-long foolish argument,

Drink, boys, drink !

To the times when men were men indeed,
To our fathers' youth and our mothers' creed,
And to every faith that may succeed,
To the after age and the later tongue
That will ring the changes we have rung
And sing the songs we have left unsung,
Drink, boys, drink !

When the eye is dull and the hand is cold,
Then should the pocket be full of gold,
For no one will love us when we're old.
So to vulgar gold and what it gets
And an honest end to all our debts,
For an old wine softens old regrets,
Drink, boys, drink !

When we are asleep beneath grey stone,
Our children's lives shall repeat our own,
For the light remains though the days be flown.

To the opening buds of this ended May,
And to all sweet things that will not stay,
And to every dog that has had his day,
 Drink, boys, drink !

SIX WISE FOOLS

TWELVE had struck. Our talk subsided.

We were comrades in the schools
By the world awhile divided —

Six sententious merry fools.
And I said, “ We ’ve talked of college,
Resurrecting callow youth.

But you since have lived ; what knowledge

Have you gathered of the Truth?
And you first, most learned scholar,
Whom I ’m proud to sit beside,
Speak : does wisdom sans a dollar

Leave you wholly satisfied?
You have walked, and never wavered,
In the paths the sages took

And three publishers have favoured
 With a yet unpublished book.
The soul's garden you have weeded
 Which we mortals trample through,
You love much we leave unheeded.
 Speak, and let us learn of you."
And the student thus proceeded,
 As a gentle sigh he drew :

THE SCHOLAR

I 'm thankful that as matters go
 I neither toil nor spin,
But read the good old wits, heigh ho !
 And live with elder kin ;

That I need neither reap nor sow
 Nor gather into barns,
But dwell among my books, heigh ho !
 Repeating ancient yarns.

Dead things are not my science, no,
Nor fossil parts of speech,
But the great human heart, heigh ho !
That pedants never reach.

The record of man's joy and woe
Upon his sculptured face
I read by my heart's light, heigh ho !
And vanquish time and space.

I find no vice so foul and low
But nature lurks therein,
Nor any thought so high, heigh ho !
But pays the price of sin.

I feel the pity and the glow
Of truth's sublime communion,
And learn to smile at fate, heigh ho !
In friendship's happy union.

Let this but last till death's wind blow
And till my bones are rotten,

Then let the world sail on, heigh ho !
And be my name forgotten.

“ Now you, votary of pleasure,”
Turning to the next, I said,
“ Count the profit of your leisure
And the cost of unearned bread.
Tell us what civilisation
Merits your impartial praise,
In what climate, in what nation
You have spent most joyous days.”
Quoth he, as if in admiration
That such questions I should raise :

THE SPORT

All things are nice when they are new,
When they are old, all things are horrid.
After the storm I like the blue,
After the arctic zone the torrid.

My loves are many, brief, and true,
By mutual jealousy unworried.

I like to leave my house and home
And cross the mountains and the sea ;
With one small bag on earth to roam,
That is the height of bliss for me.
To roam on earth without my bag,
That is the depth of misery.

That freedom cheats us with a word
Which sets up knaves and murders kings.
What soul is free that never stirred ?
Go cut your mother's apron-strings,
And putting money in your purse,
Fly off on the express-train's wings.

I'll stay at home when I am lame,
And build a church when stuffed with gold,
I will be grave when known to fame,
I will be chaste when I am old.

Then all the angels will rejoice
That I, lost lamb, regain the fold.

“Without some evil, nothing good,”
Your subtle theologians say.
I glorify their rectitude
By straying in my artless way.
My needful sins make possible
The higher morals of the day.

This is our only chance to taste
The sweet and bitter fruits of earth.
To pluck them all, we’ve need of haste ;
We cannot ask what each is worth.
Up, up, wise virgin ; do not waste
The little time ’twixt death and birth.

Come feel the joy of changing skies,
Of rushing streams and windy weather.
Though we be bound by fortune’s ties,
We’ll to the utmost stretch the tether,

And be they gay or be they sad,
We'll go and see the sights together.

THE CRITIC

"Shall men agree?" the next man said,
"Each mind is shut within some head
(*Pace* the minds of all the dead)
With two eyes, seldom of a size,
And spectacles before the eyes.
Then, if men differ, what surprise?

"See the wight who wrapped in sadness
Grieves how soon this life is done,
And, disgusted with the madness
Of the way the world is run,
Scorns the hollowness of gladness
And the idiocy of fun :
Why, the spots upon the sun
Can be seen, when the ray passes
Blue eye-glasses.

“And what makes the moonlight shimmer
With the dancing of the sea
And the little stars cold glimmer
Twinkle with an inward glee
While this working-world grows dimmer
If my Mary looks with me?
Not the moon or stars or sea,
But the fickle cause, alas, is
Love’s eye-glasses.

“Oh, how sad a world to cough in
Is a world once warm and fair,
And how many fallings off in
Old men’s world of falling hair,
Till they think within the coffin
That there’s no world anywhere.
For I fancy dead men wear
(Take your look now, lads and lasses !)
No eye-glasses.”

He stopped, and with a civil look
Said to his neighbour, "You come next,"
Who had been looking at a book
And seemed a trifle bored and vexed.
He laid the book down, stretched his legs
And yawned, and, emptying his glass,
Made a grimace as if the dregs
Were bitter, and replied, "I pass."
When pressed, he shook his languid head
Until at last he hemmed and said :

THE PESSIMIST

I set my heart on being good,
Believed the Bible to the letter,
Yes, joined a Christian brotherhood
When I was young and knew no better ;
And, if I sometimes sinned, I wept
That God's commandments were not kept.

As time went on, I understood
That it was wrong to be so good.

My heart I set on being wise
And passing for a clever fellow :
Reading o' nights I spoilt my eyes,
And lack of fresh air turned me yellow.
Each book I read said t' other lied,
I saw the less the more I pried,
And so I found, to my surprise,
I was a fool to be so wise.

I set my heart on making friends
Pleasant and clever, kind and witty ;
They now are at the earth's four ends,
Two only have n't left the city.
The one is given up to trade,
The other in the churchyard laid.
And when youth 's gone and leisure ends,
It is too late for making friends.

I set my heart upon a girl
Who chose at my approach to smile.
Did she but pat some frizzled curl,
I knew the angel free from guile.
But now a rich man owns my belle,
I find the others smile as well,
And my moustache no more I twirl,
Nor set my heart upon a girl.

I set my heart on seeing things,
And wished through every land to travel,
See Troja's ruins, Nilus' springs,
And culture's history unravel.
When many a sea had made me sick,
Men still were bipeds, houses brick.
Since nearer Truth no journey brings
I make an end of seeing things.

I set my heart on politics ;
I glowed for honesty and freedom.

My earnest thoughts I tried to fix
Upon the poor, and how to feed 'em.
But the reformer cheats himself,
He serves his prejudice or pelf,
And no man's will but inward fate
Governs the fortunes of the state.

I set my heart on nothing now,
But bless the gifts of every hour,
Holding my hand beneath life's bough
To catch the fruit or falling flower.
With the world breathing at my feet,
I find the sunset stillness sweet,
And with the night wind on my brow
I set my heart on nothing now.

He scarce had done, when the last man,
Who'd listened hard to every word,
Thus, rising in his place, began
As if impatient to be heard :

THE LOVER

Oh, you men who are not married
Have n't known the joy of living,
On the margin you have tarried,
Never putting out to sea ;
All your musing, all your grieving,
Is a childish thing to me.

I have done with idle moping
And have seen my manly duty.
There is no more doubt and groping,
Since I took a woman's hand,
And the loadstar of her beauty
Led me to the promised land.

For her sake my work is pleasure
And I thrive in my devotion,
Though I seek repute and treasure
But to have the gifts to give,
For my love, like River Ocean,
Rounds the world in which I live.

When I feel, in softest slumber,
Her fair head upon my pillow,
I think how the misty Humber
And the Ganges' holy stream
Send their treasures o'er the billow
To embalm my lady's dream.

Rightly did my father rear me
Close beside the village steeple,
Rightly shall my sons revere me
When they come to take my place,
For I serve my land and people
And maintain my sturdy race.

Fill your glasses up with liquor,
Drink it down while yet it bubbles.
When the heart beats quick and quicker
Love is knocking. Drink with me :
Here is death to all your troubles,
And long life, fair love, to thee !

“Yes, fill your glasses up, I pray you,”
Said I, “and make it bumpers now,
For whatsoever passion sway you
Some noble love we all avow.

“We bear a mark, an inward token,
That parts us from the common herd.
To each of us some muse has spoken
A holy, unforgotten word.

“Our stars, conjoined in youth’s first season,
Whether to musing moved or strife,
Obedient to one touch of reason
Together make the round of life.

“Drink to the loves we knitted here,
A bond by distance not undone.
High thoughts outlive the wasted year;
I drink to that which makes us one.”

ATHLETIC ODE

I HEAR a rumour and a shout,
A louder heart-throb pulses in the air.
Fling, Muse, thy lattice open, and beware
 To keep the morning out.
Beckon into the chamber of thy care
 The bird of healing wing
 That trilleth there
Blithe happy passion of the strong and fair.
Their wild heart singeth. Do thou also sing.
 How vain, how vain
The feeble croaking of a reasoning tongue
 That heals no pain
And prompts no bright deed worthy to be sung !
 Too soon cold earth
Refuses flowers. Oh, greet their lovely birth !

Too soon dull death
Quiets the heaving of our doubtful breath.
Deem not its worth
Too high for honouring mirth ;
Sing while the lyre is strung,
And let the heart beat, while the heart is
young.

When the dank earth begins to thaw and yield
The early clover, didst thou never pass
Some balmy noon from field to sunny field
And press thy feet against the tufted grass?
So hadst thou seen
A spring palæstra on the tender green.
Here a tall stripling, with a woman's face,
Draws the spiked sandal on his upturned heel,
Sure-footed for the race ;
Another hurls the quoit of heavy steel
And glories to be strong ;
While yet another, lightest of the throng,

Crouching on tiptoe for the sudden bound,
Flies o'er the level race-course, like the hound,

And soon is lost afar ;

Another jumps the bar,

For some god taught him easily to spring,
The legs drawn under, as a bird takes wing,
Till, tempting fortune farther than is meet,
At last he fails, and fails, and vainly tries,
And blushing, and ashamed to lift his eyes,
Shakes the light earth from his feet.

Him friendly plaudits greet

And pleasing to the unaccustomed ear.

Come then afield, come with the sporting year

And watch the youth at play,

For gentle is the strengthening sun, and sweet
The soul of boyhood and the breath of May.

And with the milder ray

Of the declining sun, when sky and shore,
In purple drest and misty silver-grey,

Hang curtains round the day,
Come list the beating of the plashing oar,
For grief in rhythmic labour glides away.
The glancing blades make circles where they dip, —
 Now flash and drip
Cool wind-blown drops into the glassy river,
 Now sink and cleave,
 While the lithe rowers heave
And feel the boat beneath them leap and quiver.
 The supple oars in time,
Shattering the mirror of the rippled water,
 Fly, fly as poets climb,
Borne by the pliant promise of their rhyme,
Or as bewitched by Nereus' loveliest daughter
The painted dolphins, following along,
Leap to the measure of her liquid song.

But the blasts of late October,
Tempering summer's paling grief
With a russet glow and sober,

Bring of these sports the latest and the chief.
Then bursts the flame from many a smouldering ember,

And many an ardent boy

Woos harsher pleasures sweeter to remember,
Hugged with a sterner and a tenser joy.

Look where the rivals come :

Each little phalanx on its chosen ground
Strains for the sudden shock, and all around

The multitude is dumb.

Come, watch the stubborn fight

And doubtful, in the sight

Of wide-eyed beauty and unstinted love

Ay, the wise gods above,

Attentive to this hot and generous fray,
Smile on its fortunes and its end prepare,
For play is also life, and far from care

Their own glad life is play.

Ye nymphs and fauns, to Bacchus dear,
That woke Cithæron with your midnight rout,

Arise, arise and shout !

Your day returns, your haunt is here.

Shake off dull sleep and long despair ;

There is intoxication in this air,

And frenzy in this yelping cheer.

How oft of old the enraptured Muses sung

Olympian victors' praise.

Lo ! even in these days

The world is young.

Life like a torrent flung

For ever down

For ever wears a rainbow for a crown.

O idle sigh for loveliness outworn,

When the red flush of each unfailing morn

Floods every field and grove,

And no moon wanes but some one is in love.

O wasted tear,

A new soul wakes with each awakened year.

Beneath these rags, these blood-clots on the face,

The valiant soul is still the same, the same

The strength, the art, the inevitable grace,
The thirst unquenched for fame
Quenching base passion, the high will severe,
The long obedience, and the knightly flame
Of loyalty to honour and a name.

Give o'er, ye chords, your music ere ye tire,
Be sweetly mute, O lyre.
Words soon are cold, and life is warm for ever.
One half of honour is the strong endeavour,
Success the other, but when both conspire
Youth has her perfect crown, and age her old desire.

THE BOTTLES AND THE WINE

LINES READ AT THE REUNION OF A
COLLEGE CLUB

WOULD you have an illustration
Of the thing we fellows are?
Liken every generation
To the bottles in the bar :
Vessels full of precious liquor
Standing in their brave array, —
Never bosom friends were thicker
Or of franker heart than they,
There congenially hobnobbing,
Always ready for a bout,
As half laughing and half sobbing
The fine spirits bubble out.

We buy, break, drink, waste, decant them —

Bottles come and bottles go —

Yet there always, when you want them,

Stand the bottles in a row :

Port and sherry, rum and brandy,

Irish, Bourbon, Scotch, and rye,

Always smiling, always handy

When the heart 's a trifle dry.

Though the bottles change their label

And tag on another name,

They're as welcome at the table,

For the liquor 's still the same.

Days gone by saw jugs in plenty,

Now less frequently on view.

Every year some ten or twenty

Pass to fields and pastures new.

There, replenished, they grow fatter

And their bellies bulge amain,

But though full as yet of matter,

You may mark a certain drain,
For the busy world's contention
Brings the liquid down a bit,
And a small god I won't mention
Sometimes takes a pull at it.
Yet apart from some mischances,
Though not standing where they stood,
For big dinners and small dances
Our old bottles still are good.
But when once the dregs are emptied,
We throw bottles in a heap,
Not one favourite exempted,
Were its spirit fine or cheap.
They're doled out in the back alley
By the scrawny hands of hags
When gaunt Death comes shilly-shally
Crying, "Bottles and old rags!"
What of that? While face and feature,
Manners, minds, and pleasures pass,
Nature breeds a younger creature,

Mate to what the other was,
And the sports we had forsaken,
And the fancies blown away
In the brighter souls they waken
Live for ever and a day.
The proud glories that entice us
No more fail because we pass
Than the founts of Dionysus
For the quaffing of a glass.

But what happens to the liquor?
The old bottles' fate to share,
Only that its flight is quicker
Up the vortices of air?
Is it lost as soon as tasted,
Rising upon moth-like wings
To be caught and scorched and wasted
In this foolish flame of things?
Ah, the blood of nature's spilling
Trickles back into her veins,

And her cup is ever filling
 With the vintage that she strains.
For a moment she befriends us
 With unsealing of our eyes,
But the light of life she lends us
 Floods her everlasting skies.
The sweet wine that makes our passion
 Linking heart to mortal heart
Is her ancient fire to fashion
 All the marvels of her art.
It has painted woman's beauty,
 It is parent to the flowers,
It has wedded joy to duty,
 Portioned loves among the hours,
Built us palaces and churches,
 Plucked its music from the lyre,
Lighted all the spirit's searches
 Through the mazes of desire,
Yes, and scorning earthly places
 And our human loves and wars

It has peopled heaven's spaces
And has gilded heaven's stars.

Drink, then, of this cup and drain it.
Let the wine renew the soul,
And all vessels that contain it,
May they long be sound and whole
To receive the boon and give it
That makes mortal joys divine.
Here 's to life and all who live it,
To the bottles and the wine.

THE POETIC MEDIUM

IN Chelsea dwells a Sibyl known to fame
Called Mrs. Fakir — necromantic name !
Past, present, future, open to her view
She (for ten dollars) will reveal to you.
I for less sums — the discount to the trade —
Quaff at her fount and seek her undismayed.
I found the priestess in her wonted lair
Up three steep flights of narrow dirty stair.
Chill was the darkened chamber. A thick fume
Of kerosene lent odour to the gloom.
Clothed in black weeds, pale, with delirious hair,
Rocked Mrs. Fakir in her rocking-chair.
I told my errand ; with some hushed complaint
About the fee, she fell into a faint,

Thrice rolled her eyes, thrice snorted through her
nose,

Thrice wrung her hands, and wriggled thrice her toes,
Then spoke. (I versify : she uttered vulgar prose.)

“ You want some verse : not every poet’s soul

Whose aid you crave is still in my control.

Whom would you summon? You must ask the boon

Of some frail wight that floats below the moon.

The spirits that have risen to the stars

Reck not the echoes of our earthly jars.

Their troubles past, they have forgotten ours,

And move unmoved by even magic powers.

Only weak souls entangled in the mesh

Of passion, dying, still are bond to flesh,

And hover o’er the battle-field of life

To smell their kindred blood and pine for strife.

Such I may summon, for they have no choice

Who crave to live again and find a voice.”

“ ’T is well,” I answered. “ If the gods so please,

We will not call on Aristophanes,

Horace shall slumber, Juvenal be dumb.
They rest in peace. But haply Swift will come."
"Not Swift," she said, "not Swift. I cannot tell
Whether he flew to heaven or to hell,
But he is gone far from this mild, low-born,
And canting age, incapable of scorn."
"Well, summon Byron, then," I said and sighed.
"Byron is also safe," the witch replied.
"The first sin punished and the first forgiven
Is love's, the slip of climbers into heaven.
The petted passion and the shallow dream
He purged at last; the heart survived supreme."
"Byron gone too," thought I, "what wit remains?
All younger sprites have water in their veins.
But, ah! might not the living help me out?
Don't phantoms of the living flit about?"
"They do, they do," quoth Chelsea's Pythoness.
"Here in my telepathic cave's recess
All that they say or think or wish or feel
I read aloud, but most what they conceal.

Whom would you plagiarise? You 're silent? Why,
Have you forgot the ages galaxy — ”

I trembled as she named them one by one,
From Willy Frilly down to Spider Spun.

“Spare me,” I cried. “Shall some prolific bard

Reel off bright lyrics at a cent a yard,

All about April rain, December snow,

The brook, the sunset, and the squawking crow?

Shall little Swinburnes turn a verse with ease

And sing the flaccid pleasures of disease?

Shall mimics, drunk with each Castalian rill,

Be any poet but themselves at will,

Luscious when Keats, when Spenser quaint and dull,

When Browning turgid, and Noodles null?

Shall weaklings, in thick verse and tortured prose,

Strike affectation's quintessential pose,

Sniffing the odours of a perfumed brain

Where melts a Wordsworth *plus* a Paul Verlaine?

When, with no art, were precious fabrics wrought,

When metaphysics with no mastering thought?

No, Mrs. Fakir, none of this small fry.
Catch me some ghost of sense, or else good-bye.
Not at my bidding shall this choir prolong
The cloying drivel of unmeaning song,
Enrich the echo, maul the note and tease,
Miauling nothing in a hundred keys.
Better Pope's squirrel eye and polished sneer
Than idiot mouthings, false without veneer.
Better Boileau's 'monotony in wire,'
Dressing good wit in periwigged attire ;
For in a garden's alleys or a wood
Hung all in green, monotony is good,
And a frail stem may need a bit of wire
To keep the rose from trailing in the mire.
Never will they dig deep or build for time
Who of unreason weave a maze of rhyme,
Worship a weakness, nurse a whim, and bind
Wreaths about temples tenantless of mind,
Forsake the path the seeing Muses trod,
And shatter Nature to discover God.

He only climbs the skies and proudly sings
Whose heart, attentive, feels the pulse of things,
Masters the fact, and hails the changeless goal
That beckons, purges, and fulfils the soul.”
I ceased : no ghost was willing to befriend,
And all the living useless to my end.
Meantime the hag awoke with vacant stare,
And passed her bony fingers through her hair.
I left her den and hastened back to town,
Writing the while my sad experience down.
This you have heard. ’T is little that I give,
But it makes sense. Long, masters, may you live.

YOUNG SAMMY'S FIRST WILD OATS

LINES WRITTEN BEFORE THE PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION OF 1900

MID Uncle Sam's expanded acres
 There 's an old, secluded glade
Where grey Puritans and Quakers
 Still grow fervid in the shade ;
And the same great elms and beeches
 That once graced the ancestral farm,
Bending to the old men's speeches,
 Lend their words an echo's charm.
Laurel, clematis, and vine
 Weave green trellises about,
And three maples and a pine
 Shut the mucker-village out.
Yet the smoke of trade and battle

Cannot quite be banished hence,
And the air-line to Seattle
Whizzes just behind the fence.

As one day old Deacon Plaster
Hobbled to the wonted nook,
There was Doctor Wise, the pastor,
Meekly sitting with his book.
“What has happened, Brother Deacon,
That you look so hot and vexed?
Is it something I might speak on
When I preach on Sabbath next?”
“Doctor Wise,” replied the other,
As he wiped the sweat away,
“’T is a wicked sin, my brother,
You should preach on every day.
Cousin Sammy’s gone a-tooting
To the Creole County fair,
Where the very sun’s polluting
And there’s fever in the air

He has picked up three young lasses,
Three mulattoes on the mart,
Who have offered him free passes
To their fortune and their heart.
One young woman he respected,
Vowed he only came to woo.
But his word may be neglected
Since he ravished the other two.
In the Porto Rican billing
And carousing, I allow
That the little minx was willing,
Though she may be sorry now.
But what came of those embraces
And that taint of nigger blood?
Now he looks on outraged faces
And can laugh, defying God:
He can stretch his hand, relieving,
And strike down a cheated slave.
Oh, if Uncle Sam were living,
This would bring him to his grave!"

Deacon Plaster ceased and, sighing,
Mopped the reeking of his brain.
Doctor Wise, before replying,
Put his goggles on again.
“ Brother Plaster, to be candid,
Were I managing the farm,
I should do as the old man did —
Lying low and safe from harm,
Shoot at poachers from the hedges,
If they ventured within range,
Just round out my acre's edges,
Grow and grow, but never change.
I am old, and you are old, sir :
Old the thoughts we live among.
If the truth were to be told, sir,
None of us was ever young.
In the towns of sombre Britain —
Merry England turned about —
We were marked at birth and smitten
Whom the Lord had chosen out ;

Picked to found a pilgrim nation,
Far from men, estranged, remote,
With the desert for a station
And the ocean for a moat ;
To rebuke by sober living,
In the dread of wrath to come,
Of the joys of this world's giving
The abominable sum.
Yet all passion's seeds came smuggled
In our narrow pilgrim ark,
And, unwatered, grew and struggled,
Pushed for ages through the dark,
And, when summer granted pardon,
Burst into the upper air,
Till that desert was a garden
And that sea a thoroughfare.
Thus the virtue we rely on
Melted 'neath the heathen sun,
And what should have been a Zion
Came to be this Babylon.

Ignorant of ancient sorrow,
 With hot young blood in their veins,
Now the prophets of the morrow
 Ply the spur and hold the reins.
Can we blame them? Rather blame us, —
 Us, who uttered idle things.
Our false prophecies shall shame us,
 And our weak imaginings.
Liberty ! delicious sound !
 The world loved it, and is free.
But what 's freedom? To be bound
 By a chance majority.
Few are rich and many poor,
 Though all minds show one dull hue.
Equality we don't secure,
 Mediocrity we do.
Ah ! what dreams beguiled our youth !
 Brothers we had hoped to be ;
But competition is the truth
 Of what we called fraternity.

Can we blame them we mistaught
 If now they seek another guide
And, since our wisdom comes to naught,
 Take counsel of their proper pride?
Nature beckons them, inviting
 To a deeper draught of fate,
And, the heart's desire inciting,
 Can we stop and bid them wait?

“If old Uncle Sam were living,
 This, you say, should never be :
Ah ! if Uncle Sam were living,
 He might weep, but he must see.
Yet he died in time, believing
 In the gods that ruled his days.
We, alas ! survive him, grieving
 Under gods we will not praise.
The keen pleasures of December
 Mean the joys of April lost ;
And shall rising suns remember

All the dream worlds they have crossed?
 All things mortal have their season :
 Nothing lives, for ever young,
 But renews its life by treason
 To the thing from which it sprung,
 And when man has reached immortal
 Mansions, after toiling long,
 Life deserts him at the portal,
 And he only lives in song.

“As for Sam, the son, I wonder
 If you know the fellow's heart :
 There may yet be something under
 Nobler than the outer part.
 When he told that señorita
 That he kissed and hugged her close
 Like a brother, did he cheat her?
 Did he cheat himself? Who knows?
 That he liked her, that is certain ;
 That he wronged her is n't true.

On his thoughts I draw the curtain :

I don't know them, nor do you.

In her maid, the facile Rica,

We have quite another case.

Hardly did he go to seek her,

When she rushed to his embrace.

I confess it was improper,

But all flesh, alas ! is flesh.

Things had gone too far to drop her ;

Each was in the other's mesh.

But with that poor Filipina,

When she shrank from his caress,

His contemptible demeanour

Is n't easy to express.

First he bought her, then he kicked her ;

But the truth is, he was drunk,

For that day had crowned him victor,

And a Spanish fleet was sunk.

“ You perceive I do not spare him,
Nor am blinded to his moles
By the Christian love I bear him ;
Yes ; he ’s sowing his wild oats.
But you can’t deny him talent ;
Once his instinct is awake,
He can play the part of gallant
And of soldier and of rake.
And it ’s something to have spirit
Though in rashness first expressed.
Give me good blood to inherit :
Time and trial do the rest.
He ’s not Uncle Sam, the father,
That prim, pompous, pious man,
Yankee, or Virginian, rather :
Sammy ’s an American —
Lavish, clever, loud, and pushing,
Loving bargains, loving strife,
Kindly, fearless-eyed, unblushing,
Not yet settled down in life.

Send him forth ; the world will mellow
His bluff youth, or nothing can.
Nature made the hearty fellow,
Life will make the gentleman.
And if Cousin Sam is callow,
It was we who did the harm,
Letting his young soul lie fallow —
The one waste spot in the farm —
Trained by sordid inventories
To scorn all he could n't buy,
Puffed with miserable glories
Shouted at an empty sky,
Fooled with cant of a past era,
Droned 'twixt dreamy lid and lid,
Till his God was a chimera
And the living God was hid.
Let him look up from his standard
To the older stars of heaven,
Seaward by whose might, and landward,
All the tribes of men are driven ;

By whom ancient hopes were blasted,

Ancient labours turned to dust ;

Whence the little that has lasted

Borrows patience to be just :

And beholding tribulation,

Seeing whither states are hurled,

Let him sign his declaration

Of dependence on the world."

Thus the Doctor's sermon ended ;

The old Deacon shook his head,

For his conscience was offended

And his wits had lost the thread.

So have mine, but there 's my fable :

Now, and when you cast your votes,

Be as lenient as you 're able

On " Young Sammy's First Wild Oats."

SPAIN IN AMERICA

WHEN scarce the echoes of Manila Bay,
Circling each slumbering billowy hemisphere,
Had met where Spain's forlorn Armada lay
Locked amid hostile hills, and whispered near
The double omen of that groan and cheer —
Haste to do now what must be done anon
Or some mad hope of selling triumph dear
Drove the ships forth : soon was *Teresa* gone,
Furór, *Plutón*, *Vizcaya*, *Oquendo*, and *Colón*.

And when the second morning dawned serene
O'er vivid waves and foam-fringed mountains,
dressed
Like Nessus in their robe's envenomed sheen,
Scarce by some fiery fleck the place was guessed
Where each hulk smouldered ; while from crest to
crest

Leapt through the North the news of victory,
Victory tarnished by a boorish jest
Yet touched with pity, lest the unkindly sea
Should too much aid the strong and leave no enemy.

As the anguished soul, that gasped for difficult
 breath,
Passes to silence from its house of pain,
So from those wrecks, in fumes of lurid death,
Passed into peace the heavy pride of Spain,
Passed from that aching tenement, half fain,
Back to her castled hills and windy moors,
No longer tossed upon the treacherous main
Once boasted hers, which with its watery lures
Too long enticed her sons to unhallowed sepulchres.

Why went Columbus to that highland race,
Frugal and pensive, prone to love and ire,
Despising kingdoms for a woman's face,
For honour riches and for faith desire?

On Spain's own breast was snow, within it fire ;
In her own eyes and subtle tongue was mirth ;
The eternal brooded in her skies, whence nigher
The trebled starry host admonished earth
To shame away her grief and mock her baubles' worth.

Ah ! when the crafty Tyrian came to Spain
To barter for her gold his motley wares,
Treading her beaches he forgot his gain.
The Semite became noble unawares.
Her passion breathed Hamilcar's cruel prayers ;
Her fiery winds taught Hannibal his vows ;
Out of her tribulations and despairs
They wove a sterile garland for their brows.
To her sad ports they fled before the Roman prow.

And the Greek coming too forgot his art,
And that large temperance which made him wise.
The wonder of her mountains choked his heart,
The languor of her gardens veiled his eyes ;

He dreamed, he doubted ; in her deeper skies
He read unfathomed oracles of woe,
And stubborn to the onward destinies,
Like some dumb brute before a human foe,
Sank in Saguntum's flames and deemed them
brighter so.

The mighty Roman also when he came,
Bringing his gods, his justice, and his tongue,
Put off his greatness for a sadder fame,
And what a Cæsar wrought a Lucan sung.
Nor was the pomp of his proud music, wrung
From Latin numbers, half so stern and dire,
Nor the sad majesties he moved among
Half so divine, as her unbreathed desire.
Shall longing break the heart and not untune the lyre?

When after many conquerors came Christ,
The only conqueror of Spain indeed,
Not Bethlehem nor Golgotha sufficed
To show him forth, but every shrine must bleed

And every shepherd in his watches heed
The angels' matins sung at heaven's gate.
Nor seemed the Virgin Mother wholly freed
From taint of ill if born in frail estate,
But shone the seraphs' queen and soared immaculate.

And when the Arab from his burning sands
Swept o'er the waters like a heavenly flail,
He took her lute into his conquering hands,
And in her midnight turned to nightingale.
With woven lattices and pillars frail
He screened the pleasant secrets of his bower,
Yet little could his subtler arts avail
Against the brutal onset of the Giaour.
The rose passed from his courts, the muezzin from his
tower.

Only one image of his wisdom stayed,
One only relic of his magic lore, —
Allah the Great, whom silent fate obeyed,
More than Jehovah calm and hidden more,

Allah remained in her heart's kindred core
High witness of these terrene shifts of wrong.
Into his ancient silence she could pour
Her passions' frailty — He alone is strong —
And chant with lingering wail the burden of her song.

Seizing at Covadonga the rude cross
Pelayo raised amid his mountaineers,
She bore it to Granada, one day's loss
Ransomed with battles of a thousand years.
A nation born in harness, fed on tears,
Christened in blood, and schooled in sacrifice,
All for a sweeter music in the spheres,
All for a painted heaven — at a price
Should she forsake her loves and sail to Ind for
spice?

Had Genoa in her merchant palaces
No welcome for a heaven-guided son?
Had Venice, mistress of the inland seas,
No ships for bolder venture? Pisa none?

Was sated Rome content? Her mission done?
Saw Lusitania in her seaward dreams
No floating premonition, beckoning on
To vast horizons, gilded yet with gleams
Of old Atlantis, whelmed beneath the bubbling
streams?

Or if some torpor lay upon the South,
Tranced by the might of memories divine,
Dwelt no shrewd princeling by the marshy mouth
Of Scheldt, or by the many mouths of Rhine?
Rode Albion not at anchor in the brine
Whose throne but now the thrifty Tudor stole
Changing a noble for a crafty line?
Swarmed not the Norsemen yet about the pole,
Seeking through endless mists new havens for the
soul?

These should have been thy mates, Columbus,
these
Patrons and partners of thy enterprise,

Sad lovers of immeasurable seas,
Bound to no hallowed earth, no peopled skies.
No ray should reach them of their ladies' eyes
In western deserts : no pure minstrel's rhyme,
Echoing in forest solitudes, surprise
Their heart with longing for a sweeter clime.
These, these should find a world who drag no
chains of time.

In sooth it had seemed folly, to reveal
To stubborn Aragon and evil-eyed
These perilous hopes, folly to dull Castile
Moated in jealous faith and walled in pride,
Save that those thoughts, to Spain's fresh deeds
allied,
Painted new Christian conquests, and her hand
Itched for that sword, now dangling at her side,
Which drove the Moslem forth and purged the
land.
And then she dreamed a dream her heart could
understand.

Three caravels, a cross upon the prow,
A broad cross on the banner and the sail,
The liquid fields of Hesperus should plough
Borne by the leaping waters and the gale.
Before that sign all hellish powers should quail
Troubling the deep : no dragon's obscene crest,
No serpent's slimy coils should aught avail,
Till ivory cities looming in the west
Should gleam from high Cathay or Araby the
Blest.

Then, as with noble mien and debonair
The captains from the galleys leapt to land,
Or down the temple's alabaster stair
Or by the river's marge of silvery sand,
Proud Sultans should descend with outstretched
hand
Greeting the strangers, and by them apprised
Of Christ's redemption and the Queen's com-
mand,

Being with joy and gratitude baptised,
Should lavish gifts of price by rarest art devised.

Or if (since churls there be) they should demur
To some least point of fealty or faith,
A champion, clad in arms from crest to spur,
Should challenge the proud caitiffs to their death
And, singly felling them, from their last breath
Extort confession that the Lord is lord,
And India's Catholic queen, Elizabeth.

Whereat yon turbaned tribes, with one accord,
Should beat their heathen breasts and ope their
treasures' horde.

Or, if the worst should chance and high debates
Should end in insult and outrageous deed,
And, many Christians rudely slain, their mates
Should summon heaven to their direful need,
Suddenly from the clouds a snow-white steed
Bearing a dazzling rider clad in flames
Should plunge into the fray : with instant speed

Rout all the foe at once, while mid acclaims
The slaughtered braves should rise, crying, *Saint*
James ! Saint James !

Then, the day won, and its bright arbiter
Vanished, save for peace he left behind,
Each in his private bosom should bestir
His dearest dream : as that perchance there pined
Some lovely maiden of angelic mind
In those dark towers, awaiting out of Spain
Two Saviours that her horoscope divined
Should thence arrive. She (womanlike) were fain
Not to be wholly free, but wear a chosen chain.

That should be youth's adventure. Riper days
Would crave the guerdon of a prouder power
And pluck their nuggets from an earthly maze
For rule and dignity and children's dower.
And age that thought to near the fatal hour
Should to a magic fount descend instead,
Whose waters with the fruit revive the flower

And deck in all its bloom the ashen head,
Where a green heaven spreads, not peopled of the
dead.

By such false meteors did those helmsmen steer,
Such phantoms filled their vain and vaulting souls
With divers ardours, while this brooding sphere
Swung yet ungirdled on her silent poles.
All journeys took them farther from their goals,
All battles won defeated their desire,
Barred from one India by the other's shoals,
Each sighted star extinguishing its fire,
Cape doubled after cape, and never haven nigher.

How many galleons sailed to sail no more,
How many battles and how many slain,
Since first Columbus touched the Cuban shore,
Till Aurocania felt the yoke of Spain !
What mounting miseries ! What dwindling gain !
To till those solitudes, soon swept of gold,

And bear that ardent sun, across the main
Slaves must come writhing in the festering hold
Of galleys. — Poison works, though men be brave
and bold.

That slothful planter, once the buccaneer,
Lord of his bastards and his mongrel clan,
Ignorant, harsh, what could he list or hear
Of Europe and the heritage of man?
No petty schemer sees the larger plan,
No privy tyrant brooks the mightier law,
But lash in hand rides forth a partisan
Of freedom : base, without the touch of awe,
He poisoned first the blood his poniard was to draw.

By sloth and lust and mindlessness and pelf
Spain sank in sadness and dishonour down,
Each in her service serving but himself,
Each in his passion striking at her crown.
Not that these treasons blotted her renown
Emblazoned higher than such hands can reach :

There where she reaped but sorrow she has sown
The balm of sorrow ; all she had to teach
She taught the younger world — her faith and heart
and speech.

And now within her sea-girt walls withdrawn
She waits in silence for the healing years,
While where her sun has set a second dawn
Comes from the north, with other hopes and
fears.

Spain's daughters stand, half ceasing from their
tears,

And watch the skies from Cuba to the Horn.

“ What is this dove or eagle that appears,”

They seem to cry, “ what herald of what morn
Hovers o'er Andes' peaks in love or guile or
scorn? ”

“ O brooding Spirit, fledgling of the North,
Winged for the levels of its shifting light,
Child of a labouring ocean and an earth

Shrouded in vapours, fear the southward flight,
Dread waveless waters and their warm delight,
Beware of peaks that cleave the cloudless blue
And hold communion with the naked night.
The souls went never back that hither flew,
But sighing fell to earth or broke the heavens through.

“Haunt still thy storm-swept islands, and endure
The shimmering forest where thy visions live.
Then if we love thee — for thy heart is pure —
Thou shalt have something worthy love to give.
Thrust not thy prophets on us, nor believe
Thy sorry riches in our eyes are fair.
Thy unctuous sophists never will deceive
A mortal pang, or charm away despair.
Not for the stranger's fee we plait our lustrous hair.

“But of thy lingering twilight bring some gleam,
Memorial of the immaterial fire
Lighting thy heart, and to a wider dream
Waken the music of our plaintive lyre.

Check our rash word, hush, hush our base desire.
Hang paler clouds of reverence about
Our garish skies : laborious hope inspire
That uncomplaining walks the paths of doubt,
A wistful heart within, a mailed breast without.

“ Gold found is dross, but long Promethean art
Transmutes to gold the unprofitable ore.
Bring labour's joy, yet spare that better part
Our mother, Spain, bequeathed to all she bore,
For who shall covet if he once adore?
Leave in our skies, strange Spirit passing there,
No less of vision but of courage more,
And of our worship take thy equal share,
Thou who wouldst teach us hope, with her who taught
us prayer.”

YOUTH'S IMMORTALITY

WHAT, when hearts have met, shall sever
Heart from heart, though heaven fall?
They alone are dead for ever
Who have never lived at all.
Roses that have bloomed to sweetness
Never can untimely fade,
Blessed by death in their completeness
And on beauty's bosom laid,
Garnered in the breast eternal
Where all noble joys are one,
Sweet Elysium, fair and vernal,
Where they mount who face the sun.
Happy he whom men call lonely,
Whose companion is the truth,

And whose heart is ravished only
By the world's immortal youth.
Happy he whose single treasure
Is the infinite unfurled,
And whose voice has caught the measure
Of the music of the world.
When Death gathers up our ashes
And our sorry shades depart,
Lo, Life's flame, rekindled, flashes
From another mortal heart,
And Death turns about, derided
By the Life he would deride.
Vainly space and time divided
What eternity allied.
One great hope guides all our seeing,
One pure heaven lends us light.
Love is still the crown of being,
Faith the better part of sight.
The same wisdom's ancient pages
Stir again the generous soul

To the mighty task of ages
Crawling still to reason's goal.
The prophetic Muse of Story
Sings her ancient legend o'er,
And the sea, still young and hoary,
Chants along the beaten shore.
Spring yet yields her flowery treasures
To the guiltless hands of boys,
Chastening their noisy pleasures
To the depth of human joys.
One eternal passion drives us,
Zealots of the stars above,
And our better part survives us,
Living in the things we love.

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